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NOVEMBER NO. 18

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MAGAZINE OF HORROR

BIZARRE

• FRIGHTENING

• GRUESOME



WOLVES OF DARKNESS

a chilling novelet

by
JACK WILLIAMSON

IN AMUNDSEN'S TENT

by
JOHN MARTIN LEAHY

OUT OF THE DEEP

a new story

by
ROBERT E. HOWARD

"I LOST 54 POUNDS OF UGLY, DANGEROUS FAT!! IN ONLY 3 SHORT MONTHS"!!

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magazine of

HORROR

The Bizarre and The Unusual

Volume 3

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While the greatest diligence has been used to ascertain the owners of rights, and to secure necessary permissions, the editor and publisher wish to offer their apologies in any possible case of accidental infringements.

Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Vol. 3, No. 6, November 1967 (whole number 18). Published bi-monthly by Health Knowledge, Inc., Executive and editorial offices at 119 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10003. Single copy, 50c. Annual subscription (6 issues) \$2.50 in the U. S., Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign, \$3.00. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. ©1967 by Health Knowledge, Inc. All rights reserved under Universal, International and Pan American copyright conventions. Printed in U. S. A.

The Editor's Page

If you have read the indicia (the small print at the bottom of the contents page) then you know that we have finally returned to bi-monthly publication, and that we are now accepting subscriptions again.

It has been a hard time for all of us who care about MOH — for those of you who want to see us more often, or who wanted to be able to subscribe, and for us. The details of handling what amounted to single-issue subscriptions are tedious, but we shall still have to accept them in relation to *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES* and *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* for a while. And, I have been even more frustrated than you by the delays in schedule, and having to ask so many authors to be patient while I tried to fit their stories in.

I shall continue to be frustrated in my attempts to bring you many of the stories that you have asked for, plus new stories (including stories by new authors, who are always wel-

come when there is room) in each issue. One trouble is that it is exceptionally difficult to estimate the *effective* length of material from the old magazines. The number of words is one thing; the effective length is the number of lines, and this is a very tricky thing. (If every line on this page had only one word, then the effective length of this editorial would be the same as if every line were filled.) So often, stories come out much longer in effective length than a word estimate indicates; that means that something I had set up for the issue has to be crowded out. And sometimes (because I cannot know until the last moment) a story originally planned for SMS or even FSF will have to be put in to MOH, etc. Lafferty's little story is surely strange and bizarre, but I agree that it would have gone better in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*. (This sort of thing happens rarely, but it does happen.)

And now, if you do not object (a plurality of you active readers who write and tell me) we can offer you longer stories, broken up into two parts, now and then. RAWL

In Amundsen's Tent

by John Martin Leahy

It was during the first year of *WEIRD TALES* that the name JOHN MARTIN LEAHY first appeared on the contents page of this magazine. The November 1923 issue presented part one of a six-part serial, entitled *Draconda*; a second serial, *Drome* began in the January 1927 issue of WT, running for five installments, and was reprinted in hard covers by FPCI in 1952. The edition is now out of print. Leahy had four short stories in WT, as well, of which the present was the next to last. It is the best of the entire six, and was on many readers' "tops" lists for years thereafter; it was reprinted in the August 1935 issue of WT, and may have appeared in anthologies. That it remains vivid in the memory is attested by the number of requests we have received for running it here.

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"Inside the tent, in a little bag, I left a letter, addressed to H.M. the King, giving information of what he (*sic*) had accomplished . . . Besides this letter, I wrote a short epistle to Captain Scott, who, I assumed, would be the first to find the tent."

Captain Amundsen:

The South Pole.

"We have just arrived at this tent, 2 miles from our camp, therefore about 1-1/2 miles from the pole. In the tent we find a record of five Norwegians having been here, as follows:

Roald Amundsen

Olav Olavson Bjaaland

Hilmer Hanssen

Sverre H. Hassel

Oscar Wisting

10 Dec. 1911.

* * * * *

"Left a note to say I had visited the tent with companions."

Captain Scott: His Last Journal

"TRAVELERS," says Richard A. Proctor, "are sometimes said to tell marvelous stories; but it is a noteworthy fact that, in nine cases out of ten, the marvelous stories of travelers have been confirmed."

Certainly no traveler ever set down a more marvelous story than that of Robert Drumgold. This record I am at last giving to the world in 192—, with my humble apologies to the spirit of the hapless explorer for withholding it so long. But the truth is that East-

man, Dahlstrom, and I thought it the work of a mind deranged; little wonder, forsooth, if his mind had given way, what with the fearful sufferings which he had gone through and the horror of that fate which was closing in upon him.

What was it, that *thing* (if *thing* it was) which came to him, the sole survivor of the party which had reached the Southern Pole?

Yes, we thought that the mind of poor Robert Drumgold had given way, that the horror in Amundsen's tent and that *thing* which came to Drumgold there in his own—we thought all was madness only. Hence our suppression of this part of the Drumgold manuscript. We feared that the publication of so extraordinary a record might cast a cloud of doubt upon the real achievements of the Sutherland expedition.

But of late our ideas and beliefs have undergone a change that is nothing less than a metamorphosis. This metamorphosis, it is scarcely necessary to say, was due to the startling discoveries made in the region of the Southern Pole by the late Captain Stanley Livingstone, as confirmed and extended by the expedition conducted by Darwin Frontenac. Captain Livingstone we now learn, kept his real discovery, what with the doubts and derision which met him on his return to the world, a secret from every living soul but two—Darwin Frontenac

and Bond McQuestion. It is but now, on the return of Frontenac, that we learn how truly wonderful and amazing were those discoveries made by the ill-starred captain. And yet, despite the success of the Frontenac expedition, it must be admitted that the mystery down there in the Antarctic is enhanced rather than dissipated. Darwin Frontenac and his companions saw much; but we know that there are things and beings down there that they did not see. The Antarctic — or, rather, part of it — has thus suddenly become the most interesting and certainly the most fearful place upon this interesting and fearful globe of ours.

So another marvelous story told — or, rather, only partly told — by a traveler has been confirmed. And here are Eastman and I preparing to go once more to the Antarctic to confirm, as we hope, another story — one every and fearful as any ever conceived by any romanticist.

And to think that it was ourselves, Eastman, Dahlstrom, and I, who made the discovery.

HOW VIVIDLY it all rises before me again — the white expanse, glaring, blinding in the untempered light of the Antarctic sun; the dogs straining in the harness, the cases on the sleds long and black like coffins; our sudden halt as Eastman fetched up in his

tracks, pointed and said, "Hello! What's that?"

A half-mile or so off to the left, some object broke the blinding white of the plain.

"*Nunatak*, I suppose," was my answer.

"Looks to me like a cairn or a tent," Dahlstrom said.

"How on Earth," I queried, "could a tent have got down here in 87° 30' south? We are far from the route of either Amundsen or Scott."

"H'm," said Eastman, shoving his amber-colored glasses up onto his forehead that he might get a better look, "I wonder. Jupiter Ammon, Nels," he added, glancing at Dahlstrom, "I believe that you are right."

"It certainly," Dahlstrom nodded, "looks like a cairn or a tent to me. I don't think it's a *nunatak*."

"Well," said I, "it would not be difficult to put it to the proof."

"And that my hearties," exclaimed Eastman, "is just what we'll do! We'll soon see what it is — whether it is a cairn, a tent, or only a *nunatak*."

The next moment we were in motion, heading straight for that mysterious object there in the midst of the eternal desolation of snow and ice.

"Look there!" Eastman, who was leading the way, suddenly shouted. "See that? It is a tent!"

A few moments, and I saw that

it was indeed so. But who had pitched it there? What were we to find within it?

I could never describe those thoughts and feelings which were ours as we approached that spot. The snow lay piled about the tent to a depth of four feet or more. Nearby a splintered ski protruded from the surface—and that was all.

And the stillness! The air, at the moment, was without the slightest movement. No sound but those made by our movements, and those of the dogs, and our own breathing, broke that awful silence of death.

"Poor devils!" said Eastman at last. "One thing, they certainly pitched their tent well."

The tent was supported by a single pole, set in the middle. To this pole three guy-lines were fastened, one of them as taut as the day its stake had been driven into the surface. But this was not all; a half-dozen lines, or more, were attached to the sides of the tent. There it stood, and had stood for we knew not how long, bidding defiance to the fierce winds of that terrible region.

Dahlstrom and I got each a spade and began to remove the snow. The entrance we found unfastened but completely blocked by a couple of provision-cases (empty) and a piece of canvas. "How on Earth," I exclaimed,

"did those things get into that position?"

"The wind," said Dahlstrom. "And, if the entrance had not been blocked, there wouldn't have been any tent here now; the wind would have split and destroyed it long ago."

"H'm," mused Eastman. "The wind did it, Nels—blocked the place like that? I wonder."

THE NEXT moment we had cleared the entrance. I thrust my head through the opening. Strangely enough, very little snow had drifted in. The tent was of a dark green color, a circumstance which rendered the light within somewhat weird and ghastly—or perhaps my imagination contributed not a little to that effect.

"What do you see, Bill?" asked Eastman. "What's inside?"

My answer was a cry, and the next instant I had sprung back from the entrance.

"What is it, Bill?" Eastman exclaimed. "Great heaven, what is it, man?"

"A head!" I told him.

"A head?"

"A human head!"

He and Dahlstrom stooped and peered in.

"What is the meaning of this?" Eastman cried. "A severed human head!"

Dahlstrom dashed a mittenend hand across his eyes.

"Are we dreaming?" he exclaimed.

"'Tis no dream, Nels," returned our leader. "I wish to heaven it was. A head! A human head!"

"Is there nothing more?" I asked.

"Nothing. No body, not even a stripped bone—only that severed head. Could the dogs . . . ?"

"Yes?" queried Dahlstrom.

"Could the dogs have done this?"

"Dogs!" Dahlstrom said. "This is not the work of dogs."

We entered and stood looking down upon that grisly remnant of mortality.

"It wasn't dogs," said Dahlstrom.

"Not dogs?" Eastman queried. "What other explanation is there? Except—cannibalism."

Cannibalism! A shudder went through my heart. I may as well say at once, however, that our discovery of a good supply of pemmican and biscuit on the sled, at that moment completely hidden by the snow, was to show us that that fearful explanation was not the true one. The dogs! That was it, that was the explanation—even though what the victim himself had set down told us a very different story. Yes, the explorer had been set upon by his dogs and devoured. But there were things that militated against that theory. Why had the animals left that head—

in the frozen eyes (they were blue eyes) and upon the frozen features of which was a look of horror that sends a shudder through my very soul even now? Why, the head did not have even the mark of a single fang, though it appeared to have been *chewed* from the trunk. Dahlstrom, however, was of the opinion that it had been *hacked* off.

And there, in the man's story, in the story of Robert Drumgold, we found another mystery—a mystery as insoluble (if it was true) as the presence here of his severed head. There the story was, scrawled in lead-pencil across the pages of his journal. But what were we to make of a record—the concluding pages of it, that is—so strange and so dreadful?

But enough of this, of what we thought and of what we wondered. The journal itself lies before me, and I now proceed to set down the story of Robert Drumgold in his own words. Not a word, not a comma shall be deleted, inserted or changed.

Let it begin with his entry for January the 3rd, at the end of which day the little party was only fifteen miles (geographical) from the Pole.

Here it is:

JAN. 3.—Lat. of our camp 89° 45' 10". Only fifteen miles more, and the Pole is ours—unless Amundsen or Scott has beaten us

to it, or both. But it will be ours just the same, even though the glory of discovery is found to be another's. What shall we find there?

All are in fine spirits. Even the dogs seem to know that this is the consummation of some great achievement. And a thing that is a mystery to us is the interest they have shown this day in the region before us. Did we halt, there they were gazing and gazing straight south and sometimes sniffing and sniffing. What does it mean?

Yes, in fine spirits all—dogs as well as we three men. Everything is auspicious. The weather for the last three days has been simply glorious. Not once, in this time, has the temperature been below minus 5. As I write this, the thermometer shows one degree above. The blue of the sky is like that of which painters dream, and, in that blue, tower cloud-formations, violet-tinged in the shadows, that are beautiful beyond all description. If it were possible to forget the fact that nothing stands between ourselves and a horrible death save the meager supply of food on the sleds, one could think he was in some fairyland—a glorious fairyland of white and blue and violet.

A fairyland? Why has that thought so often occurred to me? Why have I so often likened this desolate, terrible region to fairy-

land? Terrible? Yes, to human beings it is terrible—frightful beyond all words. But, though so unutterably terrible to men, it may not be so in reality. After all, are all things, even of this Earth of ours, to say nothing of the universe, made for man—this being (a godlike spirit in the body of a quasi-ape) who, set in the midst of wonders, leers and slavers in madness and hate and wallows in the muck of a thousand lusts? May there not be other beings—yes, even on this very Earth of ours—more wonderful—yes, and more terrible too—than he?

Heaven knows, more than once, in this desolation of snow and ice, have I seemed to feel their presence in the air about us—nameless entities, disembodied, *watching* things.

Little wonder, forsooth, that I have again and again thought of these strange words of one of America's greatest scientists, Alexander Winchell:

"Nor is incorporated rational existence conditioned on warm blood, nor on any temperature which does not change the forms of matter of which the organism may be composed. There may be intelligences corporealized after some concept not involving the processes of ingestion, assimilation and reproduction. Such bodies would not require daily food and warmth. They might be lost in the abysses

of the ocean, or laid upon a stormy cliff through the tempests of an arctic winter, or plunged in a volcano for a hundred years, and yet retain consciousness and thought."

All this Winchell tells us is conceivable, and he adds:

"Bodies are merely the local fitting of intelligence to particular modifications of universal matter and force."

And these entities, nameless things whose presence I seem to feel at times—are they benignant beings or things more fearful than even the madness of the human brain ever has fashioned?

But, then, I must stop this. If Sutherland or Travers were to read what I have set down here, he, *they* would think that I was losing my senses or would declare me already insane. And yet, as there is a heaven above us, it seems that I do actually believe that this frightful place knows the presence of beings other than ourselves and our dogs—things which we can not see but which are watching us.

Enough of this.

Only fifteen miles from the Pole. Now for a sleep and on to our goal in the morning. Morning! There is no morning here, but day unending. The sun now rides as high at midnight as he does at midday. Of course, there is a change in his altitude, but it is so

slight as to be imperceptible without an instrument.

But the Pole! Tomorrow the Pole! What will we find there? Only an unbroken expanse of white, or . . . ?

JAN. 4.—The mystery and horror of this day—oh, how could I ever set that down? Sometimes, so fearful were those hours through which we have just passed, I even find myself wondering if it wasn't all only a dream. A dream! I would to heaven that it had been a dream! As for the end—there, there. I must keep such thoughts out of my head.

Got under way at an early hour. Weather more wondrous than ever. Sky an azure that would have sent a painter into ecstasies. Cloud-formations indescribably beautiful and grand. The going, however, was pretty difficult. The place a great plain stretching away with a monotonous uniformity of surface as far as the eye could reach. A plain never trod by human foot before? At length, when our dead reckoning showed that we were drawing near to the Pole, we had the answer to that. Then it was that the keen eyes of Travers detected some object rising above the blinding white of the snow.

On the instant Sutherland had thrust his amber glasses up onto his forehead and had his binoculars to his eyes.

"Cairn!" he exclaimed, and his voice sounded hollow and very strange. "A cairn or a—*tent*. Boys, they have beaten us to the Pole!"

He handed the glasses to Travers and leaned, as though a sudden weariness had settled upon him, against the provision-cases on his sled.

"Forestalled!" said he. "Forestalled!"

I felt very sorry for our leader in those, his moments of terrible disappointment, but for the life of me I did not know what to say. And so I said nothing.

At that moment a cloud concealed the sun, and the place where we stood was suddenly involved in a gloom that was deep and awful. So sudden and pronounced, indeed, was the change that we gazed about us with curious and wondering looks. Far off to the right and to the left, the plain blazed white and blinding. Soon, however, the last gleam of sunshine had vanished from off it. I raised my look up to the heavens. Here and there edges of cloud were touched as though with the light of wrathful golden fire. Even then, however, that light was fading. A few minutes, and the last angry gleam of the sun had vanished. The gloom seemed to deepen about us every moment. A curious haze was concealing the blue expanse of the sky overhead. There was not the

slightest movement in the gloomy and weird atmosphere. The silence was heavy, awful, the silence of the abode of utter desolation and of death.

"What on Earth are we in for now?" said Travers.

Sutherland moved from his sled and stood gazing about into the eery gloom.

"Queer change, this!" said he. "It would have delighted the heart of Dore."

"It means a blizzard, most likely," I observed. "Hadn't we better make camp before it strikes us? No telling what a blizzard may be like in this awful spot."

"Blizzard?" said Sutherland. "I don't think it means a blizzard, Bob. No telling, though. Mighty queer change, certainly. And how different the place looks now, in this strange gloom! It is surely weird and terrible—that is, it certainly *looks* weird and terrible."

He turned his look to Travers.

"Well, Bill," he asked, "what did you make of it?"

He waved a hand in the direction of that mysterious object the sight of which had so suddenly brought us to a halt. I say in the direction of the object, for the thing itself was no longer to be seen.

"I believe it is a tent," Travers told him.

"Well," said our leader, "we can soon find out what it is—cairn

or tent, for one or the other it must certainly be."

The next instant the heavy, awful silence was broken by the sharp crack of his whip.

"Mush on, you poor brutes!" he cried. "On we go to see what is over there. Here we are at the South Pole. Let us see who has beaten us to it."

BUT THE DOGS didn't want to go on, which did not surprise me at all, because, for some time now, they had been showing signs of some strange, inexplicable uneasiness. What had got into the creatures, anyway? For a time we puzzled over it; then we *knew*, though the explanation was still an utter mystery to us. They were *afraid*. Afraid? An inadequate word, indeed. It was fear, stark, terrible, that had entered the poor brutes. But whence had come this inexplicable fear? That also we soon knew. The thing they feared, whatever it was, was in that very direction in which we were headed!

A cairn, a tent? What did this thing mean?

"What on Earth is the matter with the critters?" exclaimed Travellers. "Can it be that . . . ?"

"It's for us to find out what it means," said Sutherland.

Again we got in motion. The place was still involved in that strange, weird gloom. The silence

was still that awful silence of desolation and of death.

Slowly but steadily we moved forward, urging on the reluctant, fearful animals with our whips.

At last Sutherland, who was leading, cried out that he saw it. He halted, peering forward into the gloom, and we urged our teams up alongside his.

"It must be a tent," he said.

And a tent we found it to be—a small one supported by a single bamboo and well guyed in all directions. Made of drab-colored gabardine. To the top of the tent-pole another had been lashed. From this, motionless in the still air, hung the remains of a small Norwegian flag and, underneath it, a pennant with the word "Fram" upon it. Amundsen's tent!

What should we find inside it? And what was the meaning of that—*the strange way it bulged out on one side?*

The entrance was securely laced. The tent, it was certain, had been here for a year, all through the long Antarctic night; and yet, to our astonishment, but little snow was piled up about it, and most of this was drift. The explanation of this must, I suppose, be that, before the air currents have reached the Pole, almost all the snow has been deposited from them.

For some minutes we just stood there, and many, and some of

them dreadful enough, were the thoughts that came and went. Through the long Antarctic night! What strange things this tent could tell us had it been vouchsafed the power of words! But strange things it might tell us, nevertheless. For what was that inside, making the tent bulge out in so unaccountable a manner? I moved forward to feel of it there with my mittened hand, but, for some reason that I can not explain, I of a sudden drew back. At that instant one of the dogs whined—the sound so strange and the terror of the animal so unmistakable that I shuddered and felt a chill pass through my heart. Others of the dogs began to whine in that mysterious manner, and all shrank back cowering from the tent.

"What does it mean?" said Travers, his voice sunk almost to a whisper. "Look at them. It is as though they are imploring us to—keep away."

"To keep away," echoed Sutherland, his look leaving the dogs and fixing itself once more on the tent.

"Their senses," said Travers, "are keener than ours. They already know what we can't know until we see it."

"See it!" Sutherland exclaimed. "I wonder. Boys, what are we going to see when we look into that tent? Poor fellows! They reached the Pole. But did they ever leave it?

Are we going to find them in there dead?"

"Dead?" said Travers with a sudden start. "The dogs would never act that way if 'twas only a corpse inside. And, besides, if that theory was true, wouldn't the sleds be here to tell the story? Yet look around. The level uniformity of the place shows that no sled lies buried here."

"That is true," said our leader. "What *can* it mean? What *could* make the tent bulge out like that? Well, here is the mystery before us, and all we have to do is unlace the entrance and look inside to solve it."

HE STEPPED to the entrance, followed by Travers and me, and began to unlace it. At that instant an icy current of air struck the place and the pennant above our heads flapped with a dull and ominous sound. One of the dogs, too, thrust his muzzle skyward, and a deep and long-drawn howl, sad, terrible as that of a lost soul, arose. And whilst the mournful, savage sound yet filled the air, a strange thing happened:

Through a sudden rent in that gloomy curtain of cloud, the sun sent a golden, awful light down upon the spot where we stood. It was but a shaft of light, only three or four hundred feet wide, though miles in length, and there we stood in the very middle of it, the plain

on each side involved in that weird gloom, now denser and more eery than ever in contrast to that sword of golden fire which thus so suddenly had been flung down across the snow.

"Queer place this!" said Travers. "Just like a beam lying across a stage in a theater."

Travers' simile was a most opposite one, more so than he perhaps ever dreamed himself. That place *was* a stage, our light the wrathful fire of the Antarctic sun, ourselves the actors in a scene stranger than any ever beheld in the mimic world.

For some moments, so strange was it all, we stood there looking about us in wonder and perhaps each one of us in not a little secret awe.

"Queer place, all right!" said Sutherland. "But . . ."

He laughed a hollow, sardonic laugh. Up above, the pennant flapped and flapped again, the sound of it hollow and ghostly. Again rose the long-drawn, mournful, fiercely sad howl of the wolf-dog.

"But," added our leader, "we don't want to be imagining things, you know."

"Of course not," said Travers.

"Of course not," I echoed.

A little space, and the entrance was open and Sutherland had thrust head and shoulders through it.

I don't know how long it was

that he stood there like that. Perhaps it was only a few seconds, but to Travers and me it seemed rather long.

"What is it?" Travers exclaimed at last. "What do you see?"

The answer was a scream—oh, the horror of that sound I can never forget!—and Sutherland came staggering back and, I believe, would have fallen had we not sprung and caught him.

"What is it?" cried Travers. "In God's name, Sutherland, what did you see?"

Sutherland beat the side of his head with his hand, and his look was wild and horrible.

"What is it?" I exclaimed. "What did you see in there?"

"I can't tell you—I can't! Oh, oh, I wish that I had never seen it! Don't look! Boys, don't look into that tent—unless you are prepared to welcome madness, or worse."

"What gibberish is this?" Travers demanded, gazing at our leader in utter astonishment. "Come, come, man! Buck up. Get a grip on yourself. Let's have an end to this nonsense. Why should the sight of a dead man, or dead men, affect you in this mad fashion?"

"Dead men?"

Sutherland laughed, the sound wild, maniacal.

"Dead men? If 'twas only that! Is this the South Pole? Is this

Earth, or are we in a nightmare on some other planet?"

"For heaven's sake," cried Travers, "come out of it! What's got into you? Don't let your nerves go like this."

"A dead man?" queried our leader, peering into the face of Travers. "You think I saw a dead man? I wish it was only a dead man. Thank God, you two didn't look!"

ON THE instant Travers had turned.

"Well," said he, "I am going to look!"

But Sutherland cried out, screamed, sprang after him and tried to drag him back.

"It would mean horror and perhaps madness!" cried Sutherland. "Look at me. Do you want to be like me?"

"No!" Travers returned. "But I am going to see what is in that tent."

He struggled to break free, but Sutherland clung to him in a frenzy of madness.

"Help me, Bob!" Sutherland cried. "Hold him back, or we'll all go insane."

But I did not help him to hold Travers back, for, of course, 'twas my belief that Sutherland himself was insane. Nor did Sutherland hold Travers. With a sudden wrench, Travers was free. The next instant he had thrust head and

shoulders through the entrance of the tent.

Sutherland groaned and watched him with eyes full of unutterable horror.

I moved toward the entrance, but Sutherland flung himself at me with such violence that I was sent over into the snow. I sprang to my feet full of anger and amazement.

"What the hell," I cried, "is the matter with you, anyway? Have you gone crazy?"

The answer was a groan, horrible beyond all words of man, but that sound did not come from Sutherland. I turned. Travers was staggering away from the entrance, a hand pressed over his face, sounds that I could never describe breaking from deep in his throat. Sutherland, as the man came staggering up to him, thrust forth an arm and touched Travers lightly on the shoulder. The effect was instantaneous and frightful. Travers sprang aside as though a serpent had struck at him, screamed and screamed yet again.

"There, there!" said Sutherland gently. "I told you not to do it. I tried to make you understand, but — but you thought that I was mad."

"It can't belong to Earth!" moaned Travers.

"No," said Sutherland. "That horror was never born on this planet of ours. And the inhabitants of Earth, though they do not know



illustration by Rankin

it, can thank God Almighty for that."

"But it is *here!*" Travers exclaimed. "How did it come to this awful place? And where did it come from?"

"Well," consoled Sutherland, "it is dead—it must be dead."

"Dead? How do we know that it is dead? And don't forget this: it didn't come here alone!"

Sutherland started. At that moment the sunlight vanished, and everything was once more involved in gloom.

"What do you mean?" Sutherland asked. "Not alone? How do you know that it did not come alone?"

"Why, it is there *inside* the tent;

but the entrance was laced—from the *outside*!"

"Fool, fool that I am!" cried Sutherland a little fiercely. "Why didn't I think of that? Not alone! Of course it was not alone!"

He gazed about into the gloom, and I knew the nameless fear and horror that chilled him to the very heart, for they chilled me to my own.

OF A SUDDEN arose again that mournful, savage howl of the wolf-dog. We three men started as thought 'twas the voice of some ghoul from hell's most dreadful corner.

"Shut up, you brute!" gritted Travers. "Shut up, or I'll brain you!"

Whether it was Travers' threat or not, I do not know; but that howl sank, ceased almost on the instant. Again the silence of desolation of death lay upon the spot. But above the tent the pennant stirred and rustled, the sound of it, I thought, like the slithering of some repulsive serpent.

"What did you see in there?" I asked them.

"Bob—Bob," said Sutherland, "don't ask us that."

"The thing itself," said I, turning, "can't be any worse than this mystery and nightmare of imagination."

But the two of them threw themselves before me and barred my way. "No!" said Sutherland firmly. "You must not look into that tent, Bob. You must not see that—that—I don't know what to call it. Trust us; believe us, Bob! 'Tis for your sake that we say that you must not do it. We, Travers and I, can never be the same men again—the brains, the *souls* of us can never be what they were before *we saw that!*"

"Very well," I acquiesced. "I can't help saying, though, that the whole thing seems to me like the dream of a madman."

"That," said Sutherland, "is a small matter indeed. Insane? Believe that it is the dream of a madman. Believe that we are insane. Believe that you are insane

yourself. Believe anything that you like. Only *don't look!*"

"Very well," I told them. "I won't look. I give in. You two have made a coward of me."

"A coward?" said Sutherland. "Don't talk nonsense, Bob. There are some things that a man should never know; there are some things that a man should never see; that horror there in Amundsen's tent is—both!"

"But you said that it is dead."

Travers groaned. Sutherland laughed a little wildly.

"Trust us," said the latter; "believe us, Bob. 'Tis for your sake, not for our own. For that is too late now. We have seen it, and you have not."

FOR SOME minutes we stood there by that tent, in that weird gloom, then turned to leave the cursed spot. I said that undoubtedly Amundsen had left some records inside, that possibly Scott, too, had reached the Pole and visited the tent, and that we ought to secure any such mementos. Sutherland and Travers nodded, but each declared that he would not put his head through that entrance again for all the wealth of Ormus and of Ind—or words to that effect. We must, they said, get away from the awful place—get back to the world of men with our fearful message.

"You won't tell me what you saw," I said, "and yet you want

to get back so that you can tell it to the world."

"We aren't going to tell the world what we *saw*," answered Sutherland. "In the first place, we couldn't, and in the second place, if we could, not a living soul would believe us. But we can *warn* people, for that thing in there did not come alone. Where is the other one—or the others?"

"Dead, too, let us hope!" I exclaimed.

"Amen!" said Sutherland. "But maybe, as Bill says, it isn't dead. Probably . . ."

Sutherland paused and a wild indescribable look came into his eyes.

"Maybe it—*can't die!*"

"Probably," said I nonchalantly, yet with secret disgust and with poignant sorrow.

What was the use? What good would it do to try to reason with a couple of madmen? Yes, we must get away from this spot, or they would have me insane, too. And the long road back? Could we ever make it now? And what had they seen? What unimaginable horror was there behind that thin wall of gabardine? Well, whatever it was, it was real. Of that I could not entertain the slightest doubt. Real? Real enough to wreck, virtually instantaneously, the strong brains of two strong men. But—but were my poor companions really mad, after all?

"Or maybe," Sutherland was saying, "the other one, or the others, went back to Venus or Mars or Sirius or Algol, or hell itself, or wherever they came from, to get more of their kind. If that is so, heaven have pity on poor humanity! *And*, if it or they are still here on Earth, then sooner or later—it may be a dozen years, it may be a century—but sooner or later the world will know it, know it to its wo and to its horror. For they, if living, or if gone for others, will come again."

"I was thinking . . ." began Travers, his eyes fixed on the tent.

"Yes?" Sutherland queried.

"That," Travers told him, "it might be a good plan to empty the rifle into that thing. Maybe it isn't dead; maybe it can't die—maybe it only *changes*. Probably it is just hibernating, so to speak."

"If so," I laughed, "it will probably hibernate till doomsday."

But neither one of my companions laughed.

"Or," said Travers, "it may be a demon, a ghost materialized. I can't say incarnated."

"A ghost materialized!" I exclaimed. "Well, may not every man or woman be just that? Heaven knows, many a one acts like a demon or a fiend incarnate."

"They may be," nodded Sutherland. "But that hypothesis doesn't help us any here."

"I may help things some," said

Travers, starting toward his sled.

A moment or two, and he had got out the rifle.

"I thought," said he, "that nothing could ever take me back to that entrance. But the hope that I may . . ."

Sutherland groaned.

"It isn't Earthly, Bill," he said hoarsely. "It's a nightmare. I think we had better go now."

Travers was going—straight toward the tent.

"Come back, Bill!" groaned Sutherland. "Come back! Let us go while we can."

But Travers did not come back. Slowly he moved forward, rifle thrust out before him, finger on the trigger. He reached the tent, hesitated a moment, then thrust the rifle-barrel through. As fast as he could work trigger and lever, he emptied the weapon into the tent—into that horror inside it.

He whirled and came back as though in fear the tent was about to spew forth behind him all the legions of foulest hell.

What was that? The blood seemed to freeze in my veins and heart as there arose from out the tent a sound—a sound low and throbbing—a sound that no man ever had heard on Earth—one that I hope no man will ever hear again.

A panic, a madness seized upon us, upon men and dogs alike, and

away we fled from that cursed place.

The sound ceased. But again we heard it. It was more fearful, more unearthly, soul-maddening, hellish than before.

"Look!" cried Sutherland. "Oh, my God, *look at that!*"

The tent was barely visible now. A moment or two, and the curtain of gloom would conceal it. At first I could not imagine what had made Sutherland cry out like that. Then I saw it, in that very moment before the gloom hid it from view. The tent was *moving!* It swayed, jerked like some shapeless monster in the throes of death, like some nameless thing seen in the horror of nightmare or limned on the brain of utter madness itself.

AND THAT IS what happened there; that is what we saw. I have set it down at some length and to the best of my ability under the truly awful circumstances in which I am placed. In these hastily scrawled pages is recorded an experience that, I believe, is not surpassed by the wildest to be found in the pages of the most imaginative romanticist. Whether the record is destined ever to reach the world, ever to be scanned by the eye of another—only the future can answer that.

I will try to hope for the best. I can not blink the fact, however, that things are pretty bad for us.

It is not only this sinister, nameless mystery from which we are fleeing—though heaven knows that is horrible enough—but it is the *minds* of my companions. And, added to that, is the fear for my own. But there, I must get myself in hand. After all, as Sutherland said, I didn't see it. I must not give way. We must somehow get our story to the world, though we may have for our reward only the mockery of the world's unbelief, its scoffing—the world, against which is now moving, gathering, a menace more dreadful than any that ever moved in the fevered brain of any prophet of wo and blood and disaster.

We are a dozen miles or so from the Pole now. In that mad dash away from that tent of horror, lost our bearings and for a time, I fear, went panicky. The strange, very gloom denser than ever. Then came a fall of fine snow-crystals, which rendered things worse than ever. Just when about to give up in despair, chanced upon one of our beacons. This gave us our bearings, and we pressed on to this spot.

Travers has just thrust his head into the tent to tell us that he is sure he saw something moving! This must be looked into.

(If Robert Drumgold could only have left as full a record of those days which followed as he had of that fearful 4th of January!

No man can ever know what the three explorers went through in their struggle to escape that doom from which there was no escape—a doom the mystery and horror of which perhaps surpass in gruesomeness what the most dreadful Gothic imagination ever conceived in its utterest abandonment to delirium and madness.)

JAN. 5.—Travers *had* seen something, for we, the three of us, saw it again today. Was it that horror, that thing not of Earth, which they saw in Amundsen's tent? We don't know what it is. All we know is that it is something that *moves*. God have pity on us all—and on every man and woman and child on Earth if this thing is what we fear!

6th.—Made 25 mi. today. But that must *have* been imagination. Effect on dogs most terrible. Poor brutes! It is as horrible to them as it is to us. Sometimes I think even more. Why is it following us?

7th.—Two of dogs gone this morning. One or another of us on guard all "night." Nothing seen, not a sound heard, but the animals have vanished. Did they desert us? We say that is what happened, but each man of us knows that none of us believes it. Made 18 mi. Fear that Travers *is* going mad.

8th.—Travers gone! He took the watch last night at 12, relieving

Sutherland. That was the last seen of Travers—the last that we shall ever see. No tracks—not a sign in the snow. Travers, poor Travers, gone! Who will be the next?

JAN. 9.—*Saw it again!* Why does it let us see it like this—sometimes? Is it that horror in Amundsen's tent? Sutherland declares that it is not—that it is something even more hellish. But then S. is mad now—mad—mad—mad. If I wasn't sane, I could think that it all was only imagination. *But I saw it!*

JAN. 11.—Think it is the 11th but not sure. I can no longer be sure of anything—save that I am alone and that it is watching me. It is always watching. And sometime it will come and get me—as it got Travers and Sutherland and half of the dogs.

Yes, today must be the 11th. For it was yesterday—surely it was only yesterday—that it took Sutherland. I didn't see it take

him, for a fog had come up, and Sutherland—he would go on in the fog—was so slow in following that the vapor hid him from view. At last when he didn't come, I went back. But S. was gone—man, dogs, sled, everything was gone. Poor Sutherland! But then he was mad. Probably that was why it took him. Has it spared me because I am yet sane? S. had the rifle. Always he clung to that rifle—as though a bullet could save him from what we saw! My only weapon is an ax. But what good is an ax?

JAN. 13.—Maybe it is the 14th. I don't know. What does it matter? Saw it *three* times today. Each time it was closer. Dogs still now. That sound again. But I dare not look out. The ax.

Hours later. Can't write any more.

Silence. Voices—I seem to hear voices. But that sound again.

Coming nearer. At entrance now—now . . .



Transient And Immortal

by Jim Haught

JIM HAUGHT is a very patient man, as he sent us this story some time ago, and returned it with permission to hold when we sent it back to him with a comment to the effect that we liked it and would like to run it in MOH, but could not do so for a long time, being very much overstocked. Trying to accede to your expressed nominations for reprints does not leave us very much room for new material; and while we want to run two or more new stories in each issue, we are frequently crowded by the length of these old tales. Thus authors of new stories have to be patient, and it is the short-short lengths which stand the best chance of getting in soon.

I COULDN'T believe my eyes. I had been out of the village a week, and the torment and persecution had flamed up again. I fought my way through the crowd in response to the screaming, dying

wretch. Sure enough, there he was, fighting at the bonds that held him while the fire seared his recoiling flesh.

"Warlock! Devil!" shrieked the crowd as they gleefully watch-

ed the man's death agony. I let out a bellow of pure rage.

"Fools! You ignorant, devil-worshipping barbarians!" I roared. "You murdering, witch-hunting vipers."

The crowd was cursing both me and the accused warlock. I didn't believe in witches and trials thereof.

Violently I tore and clawed at the bonds holding this poor writhing victim. The inferno scorched my flesh, and the mob shoved and struck at me, but they could not knock me loose.

Fingers of burnished steel dug into my wrists as the warlock grabbed me. He had somehow freed both hands, and I was caught in his awful destiny. I was now fighting to free myself, and screamed in raw agony as I saw my hands and arms blister in the heat. The warlock's staring eyes burned deep into mine as he held me tight.

"Let them both perish," someone bellowed, as the crowd retreated the punishing flames. "The doctor deserves his fate, too."

Suddenly, I was very calm and serene, among those ghastly licking flames. I felt no pain whatever, but was comfortably cool and peaceful; I did not resist.

The warlock then began to speak to me, in tones void of agony. "My gift to you, my valiant friend—is life. My soul will dwell in your breast, and the

life you tried to save will bear your burdens."

His clothes were burned off, as were most of mine. His flesh was red and black amid the stench of boiling blisters. When his hair became a mass of flame, I tore my eyes from his face and looked at my hands. The skin and hair were now unburned. His hands that still held my wrists, were dried and crisp. I wrenched loose and backed away several cubits; my mind was wild with unearthly meditation. I was restored whole; yet this poor mortal—whatever he might be—was a cinder of smoldering fetor.

"What happened—what gift has he given me?" I asked myself. I looked into his charred eyes, begging for an answer; I felt that they could still see me.

I knelt my tired old body beside the pyre and wept.

I am 56 years old and have spent all my life doctoring and caring for others. I was always weak and unhealthy, but I tended others more than myself. Love, forgiveness, and knowledge to others, I have always freely given. All my lifetime efforts have been wasted, for today, my people rose up and destroyed this harmless soul. These despairing thoughts, I pondered.

FROM MY kneeling position, I raised my eyes and looked into the dying embers. Somehow, deep

in my soul, I knew that a spark of immortality had dwelt here today. I was a doctor, and I knew that no one, burned as severely as I was today, could be healed by Earthly resources; my hands bore no visible injury, and there was no pain.

I stood up, very straight and tall. My body radiated strength and vigor; energy and virility pulsed through my body at every heart throb.

I began to walk toward my abode. Never in my life, even in my younger days, had I felt so well and so powerful. My mind played riddles and answers. That poor victim was something ethereal and had put his moral being into me. Had he added his strength, intelligence, health, and everything else to my own being?

The townspeople avoided me as if I were a demon. I tried to continue my previous mission on Earth, and did not let their consciences rest for the murder they had committed. I would not give the citizens any rest.

Finally, a town meeting was called. There was a special invitation for me to be present. It turned out to be a debate, with me on the one side and the town on the other. Amos Jacobs made the opening statement.

"It has been the mission of our people to destroy those who make contracts with the devil. Souls ex-

changed for unearthly powers, will bring damnation to our colony. With the good book in our one hand, the torch of purification in the other, we shall destroy these demons who walk among us."

THE CROWD nodded their approval, and then was quiet. The mediator, John Edwards, signaled for me to speak. I arose.

"You hypocrites," I accused. "You lift up the book and advocate slaughter, all in the same voice. You judge without trial. You accuse where there is no guilt. You profane your own self-righteousness in ignoring your own good book. You look on the black side of all commonplace and seek omens in all nature. There are no witches or warlocks; only in the darkness of your misshapen thinking. The spiritual world can not touch us; nor we them."

"Lies! Lies!" shouted Jack Her-rington as he arose, shaking his fist. "We all know what happened at the purification rite."

"The torch murder you mean!" I shouted back.

"The destruction of a warlock! We saw what happened to you. Your burns were healed and you became a demon like him."

"He gave you his powers," someone else added. I knew that there was some truth here; the man, through some means I knew not, had transferred his powers to

me. My added vigor and unburned hands were proof of this. It would not be wise to let this mob know that they were partially right on this point.

"Falsehood," I challenged. "Your decaying minds cause you to see distortion in everything. I can improve my health if I wish. I am a doctor."

I stared about the room, looking into all the eyes that would face me. All finally dropped their eyes; none could bear my steady gaze.

"See! See!" I scolded. "None of you can face me. You know I am right, and your conscience is devouring you. Why else would you try to justify yourselves before me? You are a backward clan; England and Scotland have given up this game of witch-hunting."

"I'll prove you are a warlock," shouted a man raising a sword. "I'll behead you so the demons can escape your body."

I grabbed the man's sword hand and crushed his finger bones in my grip; he screamed as the sword fell to the floor. I struck the man in the face, and felt his cheekbone crumble under my knuckles. The man went down with a groan. A second man grabbed me by the throat. I reached around his chest and crushed his spine in the grip of my arms.

The amazing strength in my re-

stored being awed the crowd as much as it did me.

The crowd ran into the street yelling, "Demon! Devil's tool!"

I was both fascinated and fearful of my new strength. I could easily crush the life out of any robust, fighting man. I felt reckless and light on my feet, a Samson of body and a Socrates of intellect.

DURING THE next few weeks, the number of my patients declined, even though I was very successful in healing. I could quickly cure patients who would have died under my previous care. I was doing good, as the man whom they burned to death had done; if he had had the power of a wizard, he certainly never used it for evil.

In spite of my curious success in healing others, the people became more and more fearful of me. The vipers of gossip poisoned the whole community against me; even my patients would no longer support me.

One night men with clubs and sabers attacked me. I was walking in the edge of town, but I expected and got no help. When I killed three of them with my weaponless hands, the others fled. I knew then I could never find peace and friends in this hated village; the home of my childhood had become a camp for the enemy.

I left that night in an oxcart with my possessions.

In the next village, I became the conquering hero of those with ailing bodies. Soon rumors from my home village began to invade my new abode, and I moved again when my practice fell off. When this happened at my third lodging, I changed my name and determined to move.

For eight weeks I traveled. Through snow, sleet, bears, and wolves, I fought, until I arrived in the new territory. Here in the bitter north, I lived happily and successfully; the love and respect of these simple brown people warmed my soul.

The winters were eternal here, but I never suffered. I found that crude weapons and tools worked wonders for these people. We hunted most of the time; food was plentiful, but obtaining it was arduous and time consuming. After a few days practice, I could throw a harpoon farther than their greatest hunters. My accuracy steadily developed, also.

EDA AND I became good friends and hunted together regularly. He was about my age, and he had been the greatest hunter in the tribe; consequently, he was a man of great influence with his people.

On one occasion, the other men in the tribe were many miles away

whaling, because the food cache was getting low. Eda and I went hunting for seal. It was very cold, and the uneven ice made walking difficult. When we would stop to rest, the white, silent death would chill us to the marrow. Because our igloos were sitting on the frozen sea, we could hunt seal by circling the camp.

After about three hours, we came upon a seal breath-hole in the ice. Eda explained to me that a seal always keeps his breath-hole open in the ice. The seal would fish in the sea underneath and periodically come up for air; by some natural gift, the seal could always come back to the same breath-hole. If he lost the hole, or it became frozen over, he would drown. If his enemies pursued him on the surface of the ice, the breath-hole was his escape.

Eda and I took our positions, each a few rods on each side of the breath-hole. We hid behind ice chunks and patiently waited. Our method was simple: The seal would expose his head, or perhaps entire body, for several minutes; the hunter, on his blind side, would advance, crawling on his stomach. If the seal looked around, the hunter in his view would stop, and the other hunter would advance. Either one hunter or the other would continually advance until one was within throwing distance.

Each harpoon had a linedragging behind, because the seal would always fall back into the sea.

The breath-hole was fresh, so we knew we could expect a quarry.

Presently a black head appeared and looked around. I advanced on my stomach stealthily toward the victim. The seal looked suddenly toward me, and I was still. Eda began to crawl toward the seal.

Something moved behind Eda and distracted my attention from the seal. I could not tell what it was, but there was motion. It stopped and moved again; after this action occurred several times, I knew what it was.

A polar bear was hunting us. It had its paw over its black nose, so I could not see it.

Eda waited for me to move toward the seal, but the hunt was no longer important. I stood up in full view and pointed to the bear, but Eda did not understand. Although he signaled me to lie down, I held my position.

With a splash, the seal was gone, and Eda knew danger was near. He turned just in time to meet the savage attack. The beast splintered Ed's harpoon before he could throw it; the bear was on Eda as he went down. Eda was trying to blind the bear with his thumbs, while the bear was tearing at the man's face.

The space where my lance must strike was very small. If I missed

the bear's skull, I would surely kill Eda.

I threw my weapon with full force, and my aim was true. The bear reared up and fell on its back; I grabbed the broken harpoon and drove it deep into the bear's chest.

EDA WAS ALIVE, but badly chewed. A flap of flesh on his cheek was hanging down to his shoulder. I put it into place and instructed Eda to hold it here so it wouldn't freeze. I cut a long strip of hide from the white bear and turning the fur inside, bandaged the flap back into place.

"My people never survive a wound like this," Eda protested. "Let me take my life."

"You will not kill yourself!" I ordered. "You will live and be healed. You know my powers of healing; depend on me."

Eda was very pleased when I removed the final wrappings from his face a few days later.

"You are a great healer," he said to me.

I looked at my hands and thought of nature's gift to the seal. I had a gift, too, but mine was not of nature. Mine was from a dying man: a strange, unusual, and misunderstood mortal—or was he an immortal? These thoughts kept coming to me. What was my true fate, my true calling?

One day, Eda and I stood watching an arctic fox and saw

him bury a catch in the snow. When the fox had left, a small boy appeared and dug up the animal's food.

"Stop where you are," ordered Eda to the boy. "If you must kill our brothers of the frozen plain, use a spear, not starvation."

The boy obediently replaced the food. He knew he had violated a code of the brown people.

Eda turned to face me. "The fox has a powerful gift of nature, like all of life on the frozen plain. If food gets scarce, the fox will return and find the hidden food. It is a mystery," said Eda.

The curious instincts of the northern animals fascinated me. I thought about these things. Why doesn't mankind have these instincts, too? The beasts are not as intelligent as man, yet they are wiser.

Perhaps mankind does have other kinds of instincts, also. Men I meet everywhere have a need to worship an unseen deity; and I have found from bitter experience that man also needs to destroy the foes of that deity—those who seem to be in accord with the devil. "Witches" and "Warlocks" I had seen destroyed, just because they were accused.

YEARS PASSED, and my old friends among the brown people were dying off. People marveled at my advanced age and continued

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strength, but I was becoming tired and lonely.

After living with the brown people for thirty-two years, I packed a few belongings and left. I had to see the village of my childhood; surely by now my people would be peaceful and in accord with God.

After a long journey of several weeks, I arrived at the village just after dark. Wearily I made my way to my old lodge where I had lived many years ago, hoping it was still standing and uninhabited.

The sound of footsteps behind me as I walked made me anxious. I turned to see who had followed me when I had reached my door.

"You *did* return. After all these years you have come back to de-secrete the souls of our uncorrupt children," the voice accused.

I turned to look at my accuser. He held his lamp up high, and I recognized Delbert Guffy.

"Why do you speak this way, Delbert?" I asked. "Are you ill?"

"You are bewitched," charged Delbert tartly. "Look at your door."

I saw then a cross nailed on my door. It signified that no vile soul would pass beyond. I turned to face Delbert.

"You jester," I challenged. "I brought you into this world as a newborn. Many times have I nursed your feebleness. Now you turn on me in your madness."

Delbert set his lamp on the ground, drew back his lance, and drove it deep into my stomach. I faltered and fell earthward.

Ten thousand demons struck me with their spears of fire; an Angel of the Lord crushed them with his white chariot of wrath and his mighty sword of justice. My form was void of being and air-borne. Purple clouds of boiling vapor enshrouded me, and I felt eons pulling my soul through time and space. The clouds were now blue, now pink, and then purple again. Darkness and light flitted before me at an ever increasing pace. My celestial presence was consumed by severe alternating heat and cold. My inanimate senses reeled before this maddening onslaught of variation.

I STOOD UPRIGHT. A tatar was I in ancient Cathay. The great wall of China was to my left, and to my right were throngs of my cheering comrads, who were attending my wedding. My beautiful bride stood in front of me, the essence of modesty and poise.

I heard a solemn hush prevail over the noisy throngs. A sworn rival from my ranks pushed his way through the crowd, and threatened my bride with his saber. Our code would not allow us to fight someone in our own rank, but we could destroy the source of our quarrel.

"If you will not be mine, then none shall have you," the tartar snarled as he poised for the kill.

I would not see her destroyed, so I drew my saber in her defense.

Our blades rang like a death knell, for I had broken a tartar's sacred code. I thrust my blade deeply into the side of my foe. Dropping his own blade in an agonizing gesture, he grasped my blade with both hands and tried desperately to dislodge it; he succeeded only in slashing his own hands, and he collapsed to the ground.

I extracted my saber and threw it aside. I bent over my victim and with some unreasoning remorse, was hoping that he would not die.

The Tartar opened his eyes and looked deeply into my own. This look choked my pulsing heart. These eyes were not the eyes of the

tartar, but they were strangely familiar. I could see—another time—another place.

The warlock, from the village of my childhood, had come to reclaim his soul. I had already been blessed more than most men. He had trusted my sacred honor long ago, and now I must be worthy.

I bent closer to the tartar so he could easily reach my dagger. I grabbed his left wrist and held on tightly.

The dagger seared my flesh as it went through the side of my neck.

I released the tartar's wrist, and he stood up. His side bore no visible injury, and his eyes were filled with merciful gratitude.

I sank to the ground and knowing that this would be the end of my days on Earth . . . but the day would come when an author of fiction would tell my story.



Out Of The Deep

by Robert E. Howard

(author of *Skulls in the Stars*, *Dermod's Bane*, etc.)

In sending us this story, and another, entitled *The Noseless Horror*, Glenn Lord writes: "Both were apparently written prior to 1930, but, aside from that, I can tell you little about them. *Out of the Deep* is a sequel of sorts to *Sea Curse* (*WEIRD TALES*, May 1928), for it is in that last named tale that Lie-lip Canool gets his comeuppance . . . As both original mss. were carbon copies, badly smudged where erasing had been done on the originals, I may have mis-translated a word or two. A warning, should you come across something that doesn't seem correct. It might have been my fault." . . . We didn't notice anything which disturbed us, and are pleased to present this first publication of another Howard story, independent of any of his extended series.

ADAM FALCON sailed at dawn, and Margaret Deveral, the girl who was to marry him, stood on the wharfs in the cold mist to wave a good-bye. At the dusk Margaret knelt, stony-eyed, above the still white form that the crawling tide had left crumpled on the beach.

The people of Faring town gathered about, whispering. "The fog hung heavy; mayhap she went ashore on Ghost Reef. Strange that his corpse alone should drift back to Faring harbor—and so swiftly."

And an undertone. "Alive or dead, he would come to her!"

The body lay above the tide mark, as if flung by a vagrant wave; slim, but strong and virile in life, now darkly handsome even in death. The eyes were closed, strange to say, so it appeared that he but slept. The seaman's clothes he wore had fragments of seaweed clinging to them.

"Strange," muttered old John Harper, owner of the Sea-lion Inn, and the oldest ex-seaman of Faring town. "He sank deep, for these weeds grow only at the bottom of the ocean, aye, in the coral-grown caves of the sea."

Margaret spoke no word, she but knelt, her hands pressed to her cheeks, eyes wide and staring.

"Take him in your arms, lass, and kiss him," gently urged the people of Faring, "for 'tis what he would have wished, alive."

The girl obeyed mechanically, shuddering at the coldness of the body. Then as her lips touched his, she screamed and recoiled.

"This is not Adam!" she shrieked, staring wildly about her.

The people nodded sadly to each other.

"Her brain is turned," they whispered, and then they lifted the corpse and bore it to the house wherein Adam Falcon had lived—where he had hoped to bring his bride when he returned from his voyage.

And the people brought Margaret along with them, caressing

her and soothing her with gentle words. But the girl walked like one in a trance, her eyes still staring in that strange manner.

They laid the body of Adam Falcon on his bed, with death candles at the head and feet, and the salt water from his garments trickled off the bed and splashed on the floor. For it is a superstition in Faring town, as on many dim coasts, that monstrously bad luck will follow if a drowned man's clothes are removed.

And Margaret sat there in the death room and spoke to none, staring fixedly at Adam's dark calm face. And, as she sat, John Gower, a rejected suitor of hers, and a moody, dangerous man, came and, looking over her shoulder, said; "Sea death brings a curious change, if that is the Adam Falcon I knew."

Black looks were passed his way, whereat he seemed surprised; and men rose and quietly escorted him to the door.

"You hated Adam Falcon, John Gower," said Tom Leary, "and you hate Margaret because the child preferred a better man than you. Now, by Satan, you'll not be torturing the girl with your calloused talk. Get out and stay!"

Gower scowled darkly at this, but Tom Leary stood up boldly to him, and the men of Faring town back of him, so John turned

his back squarely upon them and strode away. Yet to me it had seemed that what he had said had not been meant as a taunt or an insult, but simply the result of a sudden, startling thought.

And as he walked away I heard him mutter to himself; ". . . Alike, and yet strangely unlike him . . ." Night had fallen on Faring town and the windows of the houses blinked through the darkness; through the windows of Adam Falcon's house glimmered the death candles where Margaret and others kept silent watch until dawn. And beyond the friendly warmth of the town's lights, the dusky green titan brooded along the strand, silent now as if in sleep, but ever ready to leap with hungry talons. I wandered down to the beach and, reclining on the white sand, gazed out over the slowly heaving expanse which coiled and billowed in drowsy undulations like a sleeping serpent.

The sea—the great, gray, cold-eyed woman of the ages. Her tides spoke to me as they have spoken to me since birth—in the swish of the flat waves along the sand, in the wail of the ocean-bird, in her throbbing silence. *I am very old and very wise* (brooded the sea), *I have no part of man; I slay men and even their bodies I fling back upon the cowering land. There is life in my bosom, but it is not human life* (whispered the sea),

my children hate the sons of men.

A SHRIEK shattered the stillness and brought me to my feet, gazing wildly about me. Above the stars gleamed coldly, and their scintillant ghosts sparkled on the ocean's cold surface. The town lay dark and still, save for the death lights in Adam Falcon's house—and the echoes still shuddering through the pulsating silence.

I was among the first to arrive at the door of the death room and there halted aghast with the rest. Margaret Deveral lay dead upon the floor, her slender form crushed like a slim ship among shoals, and crouching over her, cradling her in his arms, was John Gower, the gleam of insanity in his wide eyes. And the death candles still flickered and leaped, but no corpse lay on Adam Falcon's bed.

"God's mercy!" gasped Tom Leary. "John Gower, ye fiend from hell, what devil's work is this?"

Gower looked up.

"I told you," he shrieked. "She knew—and I knew—'twas not Adam Falcon, that cold monster flung up by the mocking waves! 'Tis some demon inhabiting his corpse! Hark—I sought my bed and tried to sleep, but each time there came the thought of this soft girl sitting beside that cold inhuman thing you thought her

lover, and at last I rose and came to the window. Margaret sat, drowsing, and the others, fools that they were, slept in other parts of the house. And as I watched . . ."

He shook as a wave of shuddering passed over him.

"As I watched, Adam's eyes opened, and the corpse rose swift stealthy from the bed where it lay. I stood without the window, frozen, helpless, and the ghastly thing stole upon the unknowing girl, with frightful eyes burning with hellish light and snaky arms outstretched. Then, she woke and screamed and then—oh Mother of God!—the dead man lapped her in his terrible arms, and she died without a sound."

Gower's voice died out into incoherent gibberings, and he rocked the dead girl gently to and fro like a mother with a child.

Tom Leary shook him. "Where is the corpse?"

"He fled into the night," said John Gower tonelessly.

Men looked at each other, bewildered.

"He lies," muttered they, deep in their beards. "He has slain Margaret himself and hidden the corpse somewhere to bear out his ghastly tale."

A sullen snarl shook the throng, and as one man they turned and looked where, on Hangman's Hill overlooking the bay,

Lie-lip Canool's bleached skeleton glimmered against the stars.

They took the dead girl from Gower's arms, though he clung to her, and laid her gently on the bed between the candles meant for Adam Falcon. Still she lay, and white, and men and women whispered that she seemed more like one drowned than one crushed to death.

WE BORE John Gower through the village streets, he not resisting; but seeming to walk in a daze, muttering to himself. But in the square, Tom Leary halted.

"This is a strange tale Gower told us," said he, "and doubtless a lie. Still, I am not a man to be hanging another without certainty. Therefore, let us place him in the stocks for safekeeping, while we search for Adam's corpse. Time enough for hanging afterwards."

So this was done and as we turned away, I looked back upon John Gower, who sat, head bowed upon his breast, like a man who is weary unto death.

So, under the dim wharfs and in the attics of houses and among stranded hulls we searched for Adam Falcon's corpse. Back up into the hills behind the town our hunt lead us, where we broke up into groups and couples and scattered out over the barren downs.

My companion was Michael Hansen, and we had gotten so far

apart that the darkness cloaked him from me, when he gave a sudden shout. I started toward him, and then the shout broke into a shriek and the shriek died off into grisly silence. Michael Hansen lay dead on the earth, and a dim form slunk away in the gloom as I stood above the corpse, my flesh crawling.

Tom Leary and the rest came on the run and gathered about, swearing that John Gower had done this deed, also.

"He has escaped, somehow, from the stocks," said they, and we legged it for the village at top speed.

Aye, John Gower had escaped from the stocks and from his townsmen's hate and from all the sorrows of life. He sat as we had left him, head bowed upon his breast; but One had come to him in the darkness, and, though all his bones were broken, he seemed like a drowned man.

Then stark horror fell like a thick fog on Faring town. We clustered about the stocks, struck silent, till shrieks from a house on the outskirts of the village told us that the horror had struck again, and, rushing there, we found red destruction and death. And a maniac woman who whimpered before she died that Adam Falcon's corpse had broken through the window, flaming-eyed and horrible, to rend and slay.

A green slime fouled the room and fragments of seaweed clung to the window sill.

Then fear, unreasoning and shameless, took possession of the men of Faring town, and they fled to their separate houses, where they locked and bolted doors and windows and crouched behind them, weapons trembling in their hands and black terror in their souls. For what weapon can slay the dead?

And through the deathly night, horror stalked through Faring town and hunted the sons of men. Men shuddered and dared not even look forth when the crash of a door or window told of the entrance of the fiend into dome wretch's cottage, when shrieks and gibberings told of its grisly deeds therein.

YET THERE WAS one man who did not shut himself behind doors to be there slaughtered like a sheep. I was never a brave man, nor was it courage that sent me out into the ghastly night. No, it was the driving power of a Thought, a Thought which had birth in my brain as I looked on the dead face of Michael Hansen. A vague and illusive thing it was, a hovering and an almost-being—but not quite. Somewhere at the back of my skull it lurked, and I could not rest until I had proved or disproved that which I could

not even formulate into a concrete theory.

So, with my brain in strange and chaotic condition, I stole through the shadows, warily. Mayhap the sea, strange and fickle even to her chosen, had whispered something to my inner mind, had betrayed her own. I know not.

But all through the dark hours I prowled along the beach, and, when in the first gray light of the early dawn, a fiendish shape came striding down to the shore, I was waiting there.

To all seeming it was Adam Falcon's corpse, animated by some horrid life, which fronted me there in the gray gloom. The eyes were open now, and they glimmered with a cold light, like the reflections of some deep sea hell. And I knew that it was not Adam Falcon who faced me.

"Sea fiend," I said in an unsteady voice, "I know not how you came by Adam Falcon's apparel. I know not whether his ship went upon the rocks, or whether he fell overboard, or whether you climbed up the stake and over the rail and dragged him from his own deck. Nor do I know by what foul ocean magic you twisted your devil's features into a likeness of his.

"But this I know. Adam Falcon sleeps in peace beneath the blue tides. You are not he. That I sus-

pected — now I know. This horror has come upon Earth of yore — so long ago that all men have forgotten the tales; all except such as I, whom men name fool. I know, and knowing, I fear you not, and here I slay you, for though you are not human, you may be slain by a man who does not fear you — even though that man be only a youth and considered strange and foolish. You have left your demon's mark upon the land; God alone knows how many souls you have reft, how many brains you have shattered this night. The ancients said your kind could do harm only in the form of men, on land. Aye, you tricked the sons of men — were borne into their midst by kind and gentle hands — by men who knew not they carried a monster from the abysses.

"Now, you have worked your will, and the sun will soon rise. Before that time you must be far below the green waters, basking in the accursed caverns that human eye has never looked upon save in death. There lies the sea and safety; I alone bar the way."

He came upon me like a towering wave, and his arms were like green serpents about me. I knew they were crushing me; yet I felt as if I were drowning instead, and even then understood the expression that had puzzled me on Michael Hansen's face — that of a drowned man.

I was looking into the inhuman eyes of the monster, and it was as if I gazed into untold depths of oceans—depths into which I should presently tumble and drown. And I felt scales . . .

Neck, arm, and shoulder he gripped me, bending me back to break my spine, and I drove my knife into his body again—and again—and again. He roared once, the only sound I ever heard him make, and it was like the roar of the tides among the shoals. Like the pressure of a hundred fathoms of green water was the grasp upon my body and limbs, and then, as I thrust again, he gave way and crumpled to the beach.

He lay there writhing and then was still, and already he had begun to change. Merman, the ancients named his kind, knowing they were endowed with strange attributes, one of which was the ability to take the full form of a man if lifted from the ocean by the hands of men. I bent and tore the human clothing from thing. And the first gleams of the sun full upon a slimy and moldering mass of seaweed, from which stared two hideous dead eyes—a formless bulk that lay at the water's edge, where the first high wave would bear it back to that from which it came: the cold jade ocean deeps.



The Bibliophile

by Thomas Boyd

My thanks for *Bill Blackbeard* for loaning me his precious copy of *THE BOOKMAN*, from which this tale was taken. The oldtime enthusiast may notice a resemblance between this story and a tale by David H. Keller which was published a number of years later; but to assume that Dr. Keller was in any way influenced by Mr. Boyd's story would be risky, because there is no telling when Dr. Keller wrote his story. We know that Dr. Keller wrote primarily for his own pleasure, and many, many stories were written and put on his manuscript shelf for years before they were ever submitted anywhere. Perhaps some reader can give us a bit of background on THOMAS BOYD; I am haunted by the feeling that I have heard of him before, but have been unable to locate any information about him.

HIS PASSION, I have reason distinctly to remember, was old books, first editions which he had bound in a manner indicative of their contents. But how long he had been a victim of this lust

I have never found out. This much is certain: he made the bulk of his wealth during our war for democracy, so much money that he must have found it puzzling to devise ways of spending his income.

He was not what you would call a cultured man, for he had absurdly ungrammatical lapses. Then there was the manner in which he furnished his apartment on Fifth Avenue, not far from the Public Library with its two supercilious looking lions out in front. But the fact that he was a very powerful person gave currency to his speech. His power was not physical (for he was shrunken, stoop-shouldered, and nearly bald); it lay in the hard, brilliant light which shot from his old green eyes.

It is very likely that he took to old books, not from a love of literature, but from an avaricious desire to have a corner on something that was exceedingly scarce; and that this urge came to him after his reaches had reached the peak of their pyramid. Not content with rarity, he made his precious objects still more rare.

As you entered his apartment (he had several rooms with a fine view, from the top floor, of an expensive office building), the pall of nothing but wine-colored plush came over you. The thick hangings before the windows were of that shade and material; likewise the portieres, the huge cushions, the heavy rug, and the fat chairs. Never rising to greet you when you came in, he sat in the most obese of the chairs, his skinny figure arrayed in a wine-colored dressing gown with cord and tas-

sels. It was open across the chest, showing the immaculate bosom of a stiff shirt, the glossy lapels of a dinner coat, and a reddish, scrawny neck.

He had a button near his chair which he used to summon his Negro valet. And he could push this button without your noticing that he had moved. "Evenin'", he would greet you in his rasping, unsteady voice; and before you had got seated the valet would appear with a tray on which stood a decanter and two glasses. It was good liquor and worth going after. Tawny liquor, a proof of what the mystery of nature and the genius of man can do. And as you drank, you felt the butler-valet hovering near, but not too near. He was a huge, sleek-headed man with a blobby nose and massive shoulders. His black eyes were always swimming around in their pools of white as if they would tell of things which his lips were afraid to speak.

Between drinks, the tenacious old devil would show you his books. "See this 'un? . . . Forgot," he would mumble. "Reckon I showed you that", he would end as he removed a first edition of *Elsie Venner* out of the revolving bookcase which stood at his right hand.

Yes, you had seen that one. The binding was rough to the touch and there were two rows of ir-

regular diamonds running along the cover. Very appropriately, it was bound in the skin of rattlesnakes. You also had seen the veritable whaleskin binding of the first edition of *Moby Dick*. And the exotic feathers, artfully placed, which made the cover for *Green Mansions*. You had already mused over the flaming "A" which had been worked into the heavy brocade with which *The Scarlet Letter* was bound. You had also seen the tigerskin binding of an early copy of Blzac's *Passion in the Desert*.

But now and again this ardent old bibliophile had something strikingly new to show you. As when he added *Les Fleurs du Mal* in the silky hide of a coal black cat to his library. Or when he brought out a copy of *The Idiot* encased in Russian banknotes of several generations ago. Those sights (and the liquor) recompensed you for being shown such obvious acquisitions as *Beautiful Joe* in dogskin, *Black Beauty* in horsehide, *The Origin of the Species* in the covering of an ape . . .

What trouble and pains he went to in order that his passion might be satisfied! One evening, after the customary greeting from his armchair and the customary drink

from the glistening decanter, he reached toward his revolving case and his skinny fingers closed over a new volume.

With a gloating laugh and a shrewd, appraising look at the story he said, "You've not seen this one yet—not by a long shot", and handed it over.

There was a curious feel to the book. The binding was a kind of leather, but not recognizable. It felt thin and crackly, and was of a livid gray as if it had faded from black. There was a sort of crinkly quality about it. Also something eerie and offensive. The title page disclosed the words:

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN
or
Life Among The Lowly
by
Harriet Beecher Stowe

A hurried glance up toward the obsequious valet revealed the fact that either he had lost all resemblance to himself or else that there stood another man, a thin, bent, somnolent-eyed person.

That old man. As the book writhed to the floor he merely sat there and dryly chuckled, with an overtone of ghouliness. The old — the old — the damned old bibliophile!

The Ultimate Creature

by R. A. Lafferty

(author of *The Man Who Never Was*)

It had to happen eventually—the mating of the meanest man with the most exquisite woman

THE OLD Galaxy maps (imitating early Earth maps, partly in humor and partly through intuition) pictured strong creatures in the far arms of the system—Serpents bigger than Spaceships, Ganymede-type Tigers, fish-tailed Maids,

grand Dolphins, and Island-sized Androids. We think particularly of the wry masterpieces of Grobin. And at the end of the Far or Seventh arm of the Galaxy is shown the Ultimate Creature.

The Ultimate Creature had

the form of a Woman, and it bore three signs in Chaldee: The Sign of Treasure; the Sign of the *Fish Mashur* (the queerest fish of them all); and the Sign of Restitution or of Floating Justice.

Floating Justice is the ethical equivalent of the Isostasis of the Geologists. It states in principle that every unbalance will be brought into new balance, sometimes gently, sometimes as by planet-quake; that the most subinerged may be elevated, by a great sundering of strata, to the highest point, if such is required for compensation. And there is a final tenet of this Floating Justice, that some day, somewhere, the meanest man of all the worlds will possess the ultimate treasure of the worlds. Without this promise, the worlds would be out of balance forever.

THE MEANEST man of all the worlds was Peter Feeney—a low-down sniveler, a weak man. In one thing only he was exceptional—he had the finest eye for beauty in a woman of any man anywhere: this, though of all men he was the least successful with women. His purity of appraisal was not dulled by close contact or possession. His judgments of beauty were sound and uncompromised, though sometimes bitter.

And really, how many beautiful women are there in the Universe.

Six.

Only six? Are you sure? All that noise has been about only six of them?

Peter Feeney was sure. His rapid eyes—the only rapid things about him—had scanned millions of women in his random travels. And only six of the women could be called beautiful.

There was the lady on Mellionella, seen only once in a crowd, followed and lost, and never seen again in a year's search.

There was the girl in a small town on East Continent of Hokey Planet. About this girl there was something that caused agony to Peter: he had heard her speak; she spoke like a girl in a small town on East Continent of Hokey Planet. He prayed that she might be struck dumb; knowing that it was an evil prayer, knowing that she was one of the really beautiful ones, whatever the sound of her.

There was the girl of shallow virtue on Leucite. She was perfect. What else can you say after that?

There was the mother of six on Camiroi—no longer young, of no particular—repose or sta-

tion or ease, hurried impatient, and quite likely the most beautiful woman who ever lived.

On Trader Planet there was a young Jewess of bewildering kindness and frankness and of inextricably entangled life.

In San Juan, on old Earth, there was a fine creature who combined the three main ethnic strains of old mankind. Peter made a second journey there to see her; after first vision and departure he had not been able to believe what he had seen.

Six in all the worlds? Somehow there should have been more beautiful women than that.

Then Peter saw Teresa.

And she made the seventh?

No. She made the first. The six faded. There was only one. The most beautiful woman ever, in the farthest arm of the Galaxy — the Ultimate Creature.

2

This was on Groll's Planet. To get there, said the agent in Electrum, you go to the end of the Galaxy, and turn left. It was a shabby little world in the boondocks that are beyond the boondocks, and only shabby people came there.

Peter Feeney was a salesman of a Universe-wide product. He wasn't a good salesman. He was shuffled off to poorer and poorer territories. Now he had

fallen to the poorest territory of all.

And on that day on Groll's Planet, he heard a sound as though a swish of silk had passed over him, a thread, a mesh. It was the invisible net.

"Oh how strange are the Fish of Far Ocean!" an ancient poet exclaimed.

Peter had seen Teresa, and it was all over with him.

Peter was eating that day by peculiar arrangement. It was the smallest of the towns of Groll's Planet and there was no public eating place there. But a Grollian man raked clean sand and set a mat for Peter to sit on, and served him a meal there on a crate or box. The man also gave him coffee — good coffee, but not like the coffee you know.

It was very like a sidewalk-cafe. It was in the way where people came and went, though not properly a sidewalk. Teresa came and sat down opposite Peter on the raked sand.

"*Hari bagus,*" Peter said, which is all the words that a man needs to get along in the Grollian language.

"*Bagus,*" said Teresa. And that is all that they said to each other that day.

Peter finished his meal and attempted to light a cigar. The cigars of that world are not factory made. They are rolled by hand of an oblong leaf for

the filler and a triangular leaf for the wrapper. Often they will keep their form for an hour or more, but Peter had made his cigar badly and it was not stable.

Now it exploded into an unmanageable dissaray of leaves and pieces, and Peter was unable to cope with it. Teresa took the pieces and rolled and folded them into a green cylinder that was sheer art. She licked it with the most beautiful tongue in the world and gave the reconstituted cigar to Peter.

Then it was luxurious to sit there in the green shade and smoke opposite the most beautiful woman ever. When he had finished, Peter rose awkwardly and left. But he was pleased.

He watched from a distance. Teresa with quick competence ate up all that he had left. "She was very hungry," Peter said, and admired her quickness about things. She rose with flowing grace, retrieved the smoldering remnants of Peter's cigar, and went towards the beach, trailing smoke from the greenleaf stogie and moving like a queen.

THE NEXT DAY Peter again sat on the mat on the raked sand and ate the food that the Grollian man sold him. Once more he felt the swish of the invisible net over him, and

again Teresa sat opposite him on the sand.

"*A senhora tem grande beleza,*" said Peter, which is all the words that a man needs to get along in the Galactic Brazilian language.

"*Noa em nossos dias,*" said Teresa, "*porem outrora.*" And that is all that they said to each other that day.

But he had told her that she was beautiful. And she had answered: No, she was not so now, but in a former time she had been.

When he had finished the meal and pulled the cigar from his pocket he was pleased when it exploded into its constituent parts. Teresa rescued it, reassembled it, and licked it. Her tongue had a tripart curve in it, more extensible, more flexible, more beautiful than other tongues. Then Peter rose and left as he had the day before. And again Teresa cleaned up the remnants—ravenously and beautifully. He watched her till she finally went towards the beach haloed in bluesmoke from the stub of the cigar.

Peter wrote up an order that day. It was not a good order, not sufficient to pay expenses, but something. Groll's Planet had acquired a glow for him, just as if it was a good order he had written up.

ON THE THIRD day, Peter again sat on the mat that was very like a sidewalk-cafe, and Teresa was opposite him. Peter told the Gollian man that he should also bring food for the woman. He brought it, but angrily.

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen," said Peter, which is all the words that a man needs to get along in the English language.

"I have told you that I am not now beautiful, but that once I was," Teresa told him. "Through the grace of God, I may again regain my lost beauty."

"How is it that you know English?"

"I was the school-teach."

"And now?"

"Now it goes bad for our world. There is no longer schools. I am nothing."

"What are you girl? Old human? Groll's Troll? That isn't possible. What?"

"Who can say? A book-man has said that the biology of our planet goes from the odd to the incredible. Was that not nice thing to say about us? My father was old human, a travelling man, a bum."

"And your mother?"

"A queer fish, mama. Of this world, though."

"And you were once even more beautiful than you are

now, Teresa? How could you have looked?"

"How I looked then? As in English—Wow!—a colloquialism."

"To me you are perfect."

"No. I am a poor wasted bird now. But once I was beautiful."

"There must be some livelihood for you. What did your father do?"

"Outside of bum, he was fisherman."

"Then why do you not fish?"

"In my own way, I fish."

Peter heard again the swish of the invisible net, but he was very willing to be taken by it. After this, things went famously between them.

But two days later there came a shame to Peter. He and Teresa were sitting and eating together on the mat, and the Gollian man came out.

"Are you near finished?" he asked Peter.

"Yes, I am near finished. Why do you ask?"

"Are you finished with the fork yet?"

"No, not quite finished with it."

"I must have the fork," the Gollian man said. "There is another human man here, of the better sort. I must have the fork for him to eat with."

"Have you but one?"

"Am I a millionaire that I

should have a multiplicity of forks in my house? He is a man with an important look, and I will not have him wait."

"This is humiliating," said Peter.

"I don't know what that is. I want my fork."

Peter gave the fork back to the Grollian man, and that man took it in and set it before the human man of the better sort as a sign of the modernity of his house.

"Were I not the meanest and weakest of men, he would not have abused me so," Peter said.

"Do you not feel it at all," Teresa said. "Somebody has to be the meanest and the weakest. The worlds are full of humiliating things. This brings us close together."

This would have to be the final day for Peter Feeney on Groll's Planet. He had already garnered all the insufficient orders possible for his product. He walked with Teresa and said the difficult things.

"When you have caught one, Teresa, you must do something with it. Even turn it loose if you do not mean to keep it."

"Do you want I should turn you loose, Peter?"

"No. I want you to go with me on the ship when it goes tonight."

"There is only one way I will go."

"I have never thought of any other way."

"You will never have cause to be ashamed of me, Peter. I can dress, where I have the means for it. I can play the lady, I understand how it is done. I have even learned to walk in shoes. Were we in some more lucky place, it might be that I would regain my beauty. It is the grinding hard times that took it from me. I could change your luck. I have the languages, and the sense of things; and I am much more intelligent than you are. With me, you could attain a degree of success in even your miserable trade. It can be a good life we make."

There is a sound when the invisible net is cast over one. There is another sound when it is pulled in—the faint clicking of the floats, the tugging whisper of the weights, the squeaking of the lines when pulled taut. Teresa was a fisherman's daughter, and she knew how to do it. The Peter-fish was not a large nor a fat one, but she knew that he was the best she could take in these waters.

THEY WERE MARRIED. They left in the ship for a happier place, a better planet in a more amenable location where Teresa might regain her lost beauty.

Floating Justice was achieved. All inequities were

compensated. The meanest and weakest man in the universe now possessed the Ultimate Treasure of the universe.

Naturally they were happy. And naturally their happiness endured.

"There wasn't a catch to it?" you ask out of a crooked face. "There is always a catch to it. It always goes sour at the end."

No. There was not a catch to it. It was perfect, and forever. It is only in perverted fables that things go wrong at the end.

They grew in understanding of each other, received the glad news of coming progeny, waxed (by former standards) in wealth, and were no longer mean and inconsequential. Only one man can be married to the most beautiful woman in the universe, and it passes all understanding that that one man should be Peter Feeney.

This was perfection.

But is it possible for perfection to become too perfect?

3

FOR THIS *was* perfection. They lived on a kindred but larger and better world, one of richer resources and even more varied biology. They had a love so many-sided and deep that there is no accounting for it, and children so rare and different!

Floating Justice *had* been achieved. The least man in all the worlds *did* possess the Ultimate Creature. The balance was consummated. But Floating Justice had a grin on his face; there is something a little fishy about anything, even justice, that floats. You understand that there wasn't really a catch to this, nor any deficiency. It was rather a richness almost beyond handling. It was still better for Peter Feeney than for anyone else anywhere. That must be understood.

But, for all that, there was a small adjustment after the great compensation; a proportion must be re-established in all things, even happiness. It was the joke that the old Interior Ocean always cast up, and it must be taken in the salty humor that is intended.

Children so rare and so different—and so many of them! No couple was ever so blessed as were Peter and Teresa with a rich variety of children. Some of them were playing and leaping in the hills and rocks behind Peter, and some of them were sporting in the Ocean before him.

Peter whistled some of these sea children up now as he pondered things in the marina. Some of them broke water, splashed, and waved to him.

So many of the kids there were, and such good ones!

"Whistle about four of them to come in for dinner!" Teresa called, and Peter did so. It had been an odd business about the children, not unpleasant certainly, but not what he had expected either. And even yet, every possibility was still open to them.

"I'd like to have a people-kid sometime," Teresa said. "After all, mama had me. A people kid have fun playing with the fish kids, and they like him, too. And he could climb in the rocks with the Groll's Trolls. He would sort of knit our family together. You think about it, Peter, and I think about it too, and we see what we come up with at the next milting time."

PETER FEENEY gazed out at his children in the pools of the sea, and at his other sort of children climbing in the rocks, and he felt an uneasy pride in them all. One comes

quickly to love Fish Kids and Groll's Trolls when they are the product of one's own loins. There was ever hope, there would ever be hope to the last, of children of Peter's own kind. But he loved his present progeny not the less for it. The four kids that he had whistled in came now.

"Oh, four such pretty kids of ours!" Teresa said. "Fry them, Peter."

And Peter took the pretty fish kids that came from the water and began to fix them for the pan.

This had taken the longest to get used to. But when you have so many of them—more than ten thousand, and more coming all the time—and when they are so good; and when, moreover, they are already flesh of your flesh.

Peter Feeney fixed the fish kids for the pan. And out of his fullness and mingled emotions, salt tears rolled down his shining face to the salt sea.



Wolves Of Darkness

by Jack Williamson

I do not have to rely upon memory for my contention that one of the most vivid covers that the late Frank R. Paul ever painted was on the December 1928 issue of *AMAZING STORIES*; I still have and treasure this issue. As many of you know, this cover illustrated a fantastic scene from a short story by a new writer, a man whose name had previously appeared in the *Discussions* section of the magazine only. That new writer was JACK WILLIAMSON, and the blurb writer (who I suspect to have been Dr. T. O'Conor Sloane, later full editor of the magazine) noted the resemblance of the new author to A. Merritt. It was not just a matter of imitation, and irrespective of the origins either of his characters or his plots and inventions, Jack Williamson succeeded in being original in his results from the start. By the time that Harry Bates was gathering material for his new publication, *STRANGE TALES*, Williamson already had a solid hold on science fiction readers for such stories as *The Alien Intelligence*, *The Green Girl*, and *The Stone from the Green Star*. The present story represents his first appearance in a weird story magazine; he would appear later in *WEIRD TALES*. The theme is one he used later, but in an entirely different manner, in the novel, *Darker Than You Think*; so if you have read that novel, fear not that you already know the plot of *Wolves of Darkness*—it's quite different.

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INVOLUNTARILY I paused, shuddering, on the snow-covered station platform. A strange sound, weird, and somehow appalling, filled the ghostly moonlight of the winter night. A quavering and distant ululation, which prickled my body with chills colder than the piercing bite of the motionless, frozen air.

That unearthly, nerve-shredding sound, I knew, must be the howling of the gray prairie or

lobo wolves, though I had not heard them since childhood. But this sound carried a note of elemental terror which even the trembling apprehensions of boyhood had never given the voice of the great wolves. There was something sharp, broken, about that eerie clamor, far-off and deeply rhythmic as it was—something which suggested that the ululation came from straining human throats!

Striving to shake the phantasy from me, I hastened across the icy platform, and burst rather precipitately into the dingy waiting room. It was brilliantly lit with unshaded electric bulbs, and a red-hot stove filled it with grateful heat; but I was less thankful for the warmth than for the shutting out of that far-away howling.

Beside the glowing stove a tall man sat tense over greasy cards spread on the end of a packing box which he held between his knees, playing solitaire with strained, feverish attention. He wore an ungainly leather coat, polished slick with wear. One tanned cheek bulged with tobacco, and his lips were amber-stained.

He seemed oddly startled by my abrupt entrance. With a sudden, frightened movement, he pushed aside the box, and sprang to his feet. For a moment his eyes were anxiously upon me; then he seemed to sigh with relief. He opened the stove door, and expectorated into the roaring flames, then sank back into his chair.

"Howdy, Mister," he said, in a drawl that was a little strained and husky. "You sort of scairt me. You was so long comin' in that I figgered nobody got off."

"I stopped to listen to the wolves," I told him. "They sound weird, don't they?"

He searched my face with strange, fearful eyes. For a long

time he did not speak. Then he said briskly, "Well, Mister, what kin I do for ye?"

As I advanced toward the stove, he added, "I'm Mike Connell, the station agent."

"My name is Clovis McLaurin," I told him. "I want to find my father, Dr. Ford McLaurin. He lives on a ranch near here."

"So you're Doc McLaurin's boy, eh?" Connell said, warning visibly. He rose, smiling and shifting his wad of tobacco to the other cheek, and took my hand.

"Yes. Have you seen him lately? Three days ago I had a strange telegram from him. He asked me to come at once. It seems that he's somehow in trouble. Do you know anything about it?"

Connell looked at me queerly.

"No," he said at last. "I ain't seen him lately. None of 'em off the ranch ain't been in to Hebron for two or three weeks. The snow is the deepest in years, you know, and it ain't easy to git around. I dunno how they could have sent a telegram, though, without comin' to town. And they ain't none of us seen 'em!"

"Have you got to know Dad?" I inquired, alarmed more deeply.

"No, not to say real well," the agent admitted. "But I seen him and Jetton and Jetton's gal often enough when they come into Hebron, here. Quite a bit of stuff has

come for 'em to the station, here. Crates and boxes, marked like they was scientific apparatus—I dunno what. But a right purty gal, that Stella Jetton. Purty as a picture."

"It's three years since I've seen Dad," I said, confiding in the agent in hope of winning his approval and whatever aid he might be able to give me in reaching the ranch, over the unusual fall of snow that blanketed the West Texas plains. "I've been in medical college in the East. Haven't seen Dad since he came out here to Texas three years ago."

"You're from the East, eh?"

"New York. But I spent a couple of years out here with my uncle when I was a kid. Dad inherited the ranch from him."

"Yeah, old Tom McLaurin was a friend of mine," the agent told me.

IT WAS three years since my father had left the chair of astro-physics at an eastern university, in 1928, to come here to the lonely ranch to carry on his original experiments. The legacy from his brother Tom, besides the ranch itself, had included a small fortune in money, which had made it possible for him to give up his academic position and to devote his entire time to the abstruse problems upon which he had been working.

Being more interested in medical than in mathematical science, I had not followed Father's work completely, though I used to help him with his experiments, when he had to perform them in a cramped flat, with pitifully limited equipment. I knew, however, that he had worked out an extension of Weyl's non-Euclidian geometry in a direction quite different from those chosen by Eddington and Einstein—and whose implications, as regards the structure of our universe, were stupendous. His new theory of the wave-electron, which completed the wrecking of the Bohr planetary atom, had been as sensational.

The proof his theory required was the exact comparison of the velocity of beams of light at right angles. The experiment required a large, open field, with a clear atmosphere, free from dust or smoke; hence his choosing the ranch as a site upon which to complete the work.

Since I wished to remain in college, and could help him no longer, he had employed as an assistant and collaborator, Dr. Blake Jetton, who was himself well known for his remarkable papers upon the propagation of light, and the recent modifications of the quantum theory.

Dr. Jetton, like my father, was a widower. He had a single child, a daughter named Stella. She had

been spending several months of each year with them on the ranch. While I had not seen her many times, I could agree with the station agent that she was pretty. As a matter of fact I had thought her singularly attractive.

Three days ago, I had received the telegram from my father. It was a strangely worded and alarming message, imploring me to come to him with all possible haste. It stated that his life was in danger, though no hint had been given as to what the danger might be.

Unable to understand the message, I had hastened to my rooms for a few necessary articles—among them, a little automatic pistol—and had lost no time in boarding a fast train. I had found the Texas Panhandle covered with nearly a foot of snow—the winter was the most severe in several years. And that weird and terrible howling had greeted me when I swung from the train at the lonely village of Hebron.

"The wire was urgent—most urgent," I told Connell. "I must get out to the ranch tonight, if it's at all possible. You know of any way I could go?"

For some time he was silent, watching me, with dread in his eyes.

"No, I don't," he said presently. "Ten miles to the ranch. And they ain't a soul lives on the

road. The snow is nigh a foot deep. I doubt a car would make it. Ye might git Sam Judson to haul you over tomorrow in his wagon."

"I wonder if he would take me out tonight."

The agent shook his head uneasily, peered nervously out at the glistening, moonlit desert of snow beyond the windows, and seemed to be listening anxiously. I could hardly restrain a shiver of my own.

"Naw, I think not!" Connell said abruptly. "It ain't healthy to git out at night around here, lately."

HE PAUSED a moment, and then asked suddenly, darting a quick, uneasy glance at my face, "I reckon you heard the howlin'?"

"Yes. Wolves?"

"Yeah—anyhow, I reckon so. Queer. Damn queer! They ain't been any loafers around these parts for ten years, till we heard 'em jest after the last blizzard." ("Loafer" appeared to be a local corruption of the Spanish word *lobo* applied to the gray prairie wolf, which is much larger than the coyote, and was a dreaded enemy of the rancher in the Southwest until its practical extermination.)

"Seems to be a reg'lar pack of the critters rovin' the range," Connell went on. "They've killed quite

a few cattle in the last few weeks, and—" he paused, lowering his voice, "and five people!"

"The wolves have killed people!" I exclaimed.

"Yeah," he said slowly. "Josh Wells and his hand were took two weeks ago, come Friday, while they was out ridin' the range. And the Simms' are gone. The old man and his woman and little Dolly. Took right out of the cow-pen, I reckon, while they was milkin'. It ain't two mile out of town to their place. Rufe Smith was out that way to see 'em Sunday. Cattle dead in the pen, and the smashed milk buckets lying in a drift of snow under the shed. And not a sign of Simms and his family!"

"I never heard of wolves taking people that way!"

Connell shifted his wad of tobacco again, and whispered, "I didn't neither. But Mister, these here ain't ordinary wolves!"

"What do you mean?"

"Wall, after the Simms' was took, we got up a sort of posse, and went out to hunt the critters. We didn't find no wolves, but we did find tracks in the snow. The wolves is plumb gone in the day-time!"

"Tracks in the snow," he repeated slowly. "Mister, them wolf tracks was too tarnation far apart to be made by any ordinary beast. The critters must 'a' been jumpin' thirty feet!"

With that, Connell fell silent, staring at me strangely.

I WAS staggered. There was, of course, some element of incredulity in my feelings; but the agent did not look at all like the man who has just perpetrated a successful wild story, for there was genuine horror in his eyes. And I recalled that I had fancied human tones in the strange, distant howling I had heard.

There was no good reason to believe that I had merely encountered a local superstition. Widespread as the legends of lycanthropy may be, I have yet to hear a tale of werewolves related by a West Texan. The agent's story had been too definite and concrete for me to imagine it an idle fabrication or an undergrounded fear.

"The message from my father was very urgent," I told Connell presently. "I *must* get out to the ranch tonight. If the man you mentioned won't take me, I'll hire a horse and ride."

"Judson is a damn fool if he'll git out tonight where them wolves is!" the agent said with conviction. "But there's nothing to keep ye from askin' him to go. I reckon he ain't gone to bed yet. He lives in the white house, jest around the corner behind Brice's store.

He stepped out upon the platform behind me to point the way. And as soon as the door was

opened, we heard again that rhythmic, deep, far-off ululation, from far across the moonlit plain of snow. I could not repress a shudder. And after pointing out to me Sam Judson's house, among the straggling few that constituted the village of Hebron, Connell got very hastily back inside the depot, and shut the door behind him.

2

SAM JUDSON owned and cultivated a farm nearly a mile from Hebron, but had moved his house into the village so that his wife could keep the postoffice. I hurried toward his house, through the icy streets, very glad that Hebron was able to afford the luxury of electric lights. The distant howling of the wolf-pack filled me with a vague and inexplicable dread; but it did not diminish my determination to reach my father's ranch as soon as possible, to solve the riddle of the telegram he had sent me.

Judson came to the door when I knocked. He was a heavy man, clad in faded, patched blue overalls, and brown flannel shirt. His head was almost completely bald, and his naked scalp was tanned until it resembled brown leather. His wide face was covered with a several week's growth of black beard. Nervously, fearfully, he scanned my face.

He led me to the kitchen, in the rear of the house—a small, dingy room, the walls covered with an untidy array of pots and pans. The cook stove was hot; he had, from appearances, been sitting with his feet in the oven, reading a newspaper, which now lay on the floor.

He had me sit down, and when I took the creaking chair, I told him my name. He said that he knew my father, Dr. McLaurin, who got his mail at the postoffice which was in the front room. But it had been three weeks, he said, since anyone had been to town from the ranch. Perhaps because the snow made traveling difficult, he said. There were five persons now staying out there, he told me: my father and Dr. Jetton, his daughter, Stella, and two hired mechanics from Amarillo.

I told him about the telegram which I had received three days before; and he suggested that my father, might have come to town at night, and mailed it to the telegraph office with the money necessary to send it. But he thought it strange that he had not spoken to anyone, or been seen.

Then I told Judson that I wanted him to drive me out to the ranch, at once. At the request his manner changed; he seemed frightened!

"No hurry about starting tonight, is there, Mr. McLaurin?" he asked. "We can put you up

in the spare room, and I'll take ye over in the wagon tomorrow. It's along drive to make at night."

"I'm very anxious to get there," I said. "I'm worried about my father. Something was wrong when he telegraphed. Very much wrong. I'll pay you enough to make it worth while.

"It ain't the money," he told me. "I'd be glad to do it for a son of Doc McLaurin's. But I reckon you heard — the wolves?"

"Yes, I heard them. And Connell, at the station, told me something about them. They've been hunting men?"

"Yes." For a little time Judson was silent, staring at me with strange eyes from his hairy face. Then he said, "And that ain't all. Some of us seen the tracks. And they's men runnin' with 'em!"

"But I must get out to see my father," I insisted. "We should be safe enough in a wagon. And I suppose you have a gun?"

"I have a gun, all right," Judson admitted. "But I ain't anxious to face them wolves!"

I insisted; and finally, when I offered him fifty dollars for the trip, he capitulated. But he was going, he said — and I believed him — more to oblige a friend than for the money.

He went into the bedroom, where his wife was already asleep, roused her, and told her he was going to make the trip. She was rather start-

led, as I judged from the sound of her voice, but mollified when she learned that there was to be a profit of fifty dollars.

She got up, a tall and most singular figure in a purple flannel nightgown, with nightcap to match, and busied herself making us a pot of coffee on the hot stove, and finding blankets for us to wrap about us in the farm wagon, for the night was very cold. Judson meanwhile, lit a kerosene lantern, which was hardly necessary in the brilliant moonlight, and went to the barn behind the house to get ready the vehicle.

HALF AN HOUR later we were driving out of the little village, in a light wagon, behind two gray horses. Their hoofs broke through the crust of the snow at every step, and the wagon wheels cut into it steadily, with a curious crunching sound. Our progress was slow, and I anticipated a tedious trip of several hours.

We sat together on the spring seat, heavily muffled up, with blankets over our knees. The air was bitterly cold, but there was no wind, and I expected to be comfortable enough. Judson had strapped on an ancient revolver, and we had a repeating rifle and a double barrel shotgun leaning against our knees.

Once outside the village of Hebron, we were surrounded on all

sides by a white plain of snow, almost as level as a table-top. It was broken only by the insignificant rows of posts which supported wire fences; these fences seemed to be Judson's only landmarks. The sky was flooded with ghostly opalescence, and a million diamonds of frost glittered on the snow.

For perhaps an hour and a half, nothing remarkable happened. The lights of Hebron grew pale and faded behind us. We passed no habitation upon the illimitable desert of snow. The heart-stilling ululation of the wolves, however, grew continually louder.

And presently the uncanny, wailing sounds changed position. Judson quivered beside me, and spoke nervously to the gray horses, plodding on through the snow. Then he turned to face me, spoke shortly.

"I figger they're sweeping in behind us, Mr. McLaurin."

"Well, if they do, you can haul some of them back, to skin tomorrow," I told him. I had meant to sound cheerful, but my voice was curiously dry, and its tones rang false in my ears.

For some minutes more we drove in silence.

Suddenly I noticed a change in the cry of the pack.

The deep, strange rhythm of it was suddenly quickened. Its wailing plaintiveness seemed to give

place to a quick, eager yelping; but there was something ventriloquial about it, so that we could not tell precisely from which direction it came. The rapid, belling notes seemed to come from a dozen points scattered over the brilliant moonlit waste behind us.

The horses became alarmed. They pricked up their ears, looked back, and went on more eagerly. I saw that they were trembling. One of them snorted suddenly. The abrupt sound jarred my jangled nerves, and I clutched convulsively at the side of the wagon.

Judson held the reins firmly, with his feet braced against the end of the wagon box. He was speaking softly and soothingly to the quivering grays; but for that, they might already have been running.

He turned to me and muttered; "I've heard wolves; and they don't sound like that. Them ain't ordinary wolves!"

And as I listened to the baying of the pack, I knew that he was right. Those ululations had an unfamiliar, an alien, note; there was something about the howling that was not of this earth. It is hard to describe it, because it was so utterly foreign. It came to me that if there are wolves on the ancient, age-dead deserts of Macs, they might cry in just that way, as they run some helpless creature to merciless death.

"Reckon they are on the trail,"

Judson said suddenly, in a low, strained voice. "Look behind us."

I TURNED in the spring seat, peered back over the limitless flat desolation of sparkling, moonlit snow. For a few minutes I strained my eyes in vain, though the terrible belling of the unseen pack grew swiftly louder.

Then I saw leaping gray specks, far behind us across the snow. By rights, a wolf should have floundered rather slowly through the thick snow, for the crust was not strong enough to hold up so heavy an animal. But the things I saw—fleet, formless gray shadows—were coming by great bounds, with astounding speed.

"I see them," I told Judson tremulously.

"Take the lines," he said, pushing the reins at me, and snatching up the repeating rifle.

He twisted in the seat, and began to fire.

Ten horses were trembling and snorting. Despite the cold, sweat was raining from their heaving bodies. Abruptly, after Judson had begun to shoot, they took the bits in their teeth and bolted, plunging and floundering through the snow, dragging the wagon. Tug and jerk at the reins as I would, I could do nothing with them.

Judson had soon emptied the rifle. I doubt that he had hit any of

the howling animals that ran behind us, for accurate shooting from the swaying, jolting wagon would have been impossible. And our wildly bounding pursuers would have been difficult marks, even if the wagon had been still.

Judson dropped the empty rifle into the wagon box, and turned a white, frightened face toward me. His mouth was open, his eyes protruding with terror. He shouted something incoherent, which I did not grasp, and snatched at the reins. Apparently insane with fear, he cursed the leaping grays, and lashed at them, as if thinking to outrun the pack.

For a little time I clung to the side of the rocking wagon. Then the snorting horses turned suddenly, almost breaking the wagon tongue. We were nearly upset. The spring seat was dislodged from its position, and fell into the wagon box. I was thrown half over the side of the wagon. For another agonized moment I tried to scramble back. Then the grays plunged forward again, and I was flung into the snow.

I broke through the thin crust. The thick, soft snow beneath checked the force of my fall. In a few moments I had floundered to my feet, and was clawing madly at my face, to get the white, powdery stuff away from my eyes.

The wagon was already a hundred yards away. The fear-

maddened horses were still running, with Judson standing erect in the wagon, sawing wildly at the reins, but powerless to curb them. They had been turning abruptly when I was thrown out.

Now they were plunging back toward the weirdly baying pack!

Judson, screaming and cursing, crazed with terror, was being carried back toward the dimly seen, gray, leaping shapes whose uncanny howling sobbed so dreadfully through the moonlight.

Horror came over me, like a great, soul-chilling wave. I felt an insane desire to run across the snow, to run and run until I could not hear the wailing of the strange pack. With an effort I controlled myself, schooled my trembling limbs, swallowed to wet my dry throat.

I knew that my poor, floundering run could never distance the amazingly fleet gray shapes that bounded through the silver haze of moonlight toward the wagon. And I reminded myself that I had a weapon, a .25 caliber automatic pistol, slung beneath my shoulder. Something about the message from my father had made me fasten on the deadly little weapon, and slip a few extra clips of ammunition into my pockets.

With trembling hands, I pulled off a glove and fumbled inside my garments for the little weapon.

AT LAST I drew out the heavy little automatic, gratefully warm with the heat of my body, and snapped back the slide to be sure that a cartridge was in the chamber. Then I stood there, in a bank of powdery snow that came nearly to my knees, and waited.

The dismal, alien howling of the pack froze me into a paralysis of fear.

The wagon must have been four hundred yards from me, across the level, glistening snow, when the dim gray shapes of the baying pack left the trail and ran straight across toward it. I saw little stabs of yellow flame, heard sharp reports of guns, and the thin, whistling screams of bullets. Judson, I suppose, had dropped the reins and was trying to defend himself with the rifle and shotgun, and his old-fashioned revolver.

The vague gray shapes surrounded the wagon. I heard the scream of an agonized horse— except for the unearthly howling of that pack, the most terrible, nerve-wracking sound I know. A straggling mass of faintly seen figures seemed to surround the wagon. There were a few more shots, then a shriek, which rang fearfully over the snow, bearing an agony of pain and terror that is inconceivable . . . I knew it came from Judson.

After that, the only sound was the blood-congealing belling of the

pack—an awful outcry that had not been stilled.

Soon—fearfully soon—that alien ululation seemed to be drawing nearer. And I saw gray shapes come bounding down the trail, away from the grim scene of the tragedy—toward me!

3

I CAN GIVE no conception of the stark, maddened terror that seized me when I knew that the gray animals were running on my trail. My heart seemed to pause, until I thought I would grow dizzy and fall. Then it was thumping loudly in my throat. My body was suddenly cold with sweat. My muscles knotted until I was gripping the automatic with painful force.

I had determined not to run, for it was madness to try to escape the pack. But my resolution to stand my ground was nothing in the face of the fear that obsessed me.

I plunged across the level waste of snow. My feet broke through the thin crust. I floundered along, with laboring lungs. The snow seemed tripping me like a malevolent demon. Many times I stumbled, it seemed. And twice I sprawled in the snow, and scrambled desperately to my feet, and struggled on again, sobbing with terror, gasping in the cold air.

But my flight was cut short. The things that ran behind me could travel many times faster than I. Turning, when I must have gone less than a hundred yards, I saw them drawing near behind me, still vague gray shapes in the moonlight. I now perceived that only two had followed.

Abruptly I recalled the little automatic in my hand. I raised it, and emptied it, firing as rapidly as I could; but if I hit either of those bounding gray figures, they certainly were invulnerable to my bullets.

I had sought in my pocket for another clip, and was trying with quivering fingers to slip it into the gun, when those things came near enough, in a milky haze of moonlight, to be seen distinctly. Then my hands closed in rigid paralysis upon the gun—I was too astounded and unstrung to complete the operation of loading.

One of those two gray shapes was a wolf, a gaunt prairie wolf, covered with long, shaggy hair. A huge beast, he must have stood three feet high at the shoulder. He was not standing now, however, but coming toward me with great leaps that covered many yards. His great eyes glowed with a weird, greenish, unnatural light—terrible and strange and somehow hypnotic.

And the other was a girl.

IT WAS incredible. It numbed and staggered my terror-dazed mind. At first I thought it must be a hallucination; but as she came nearer, advancing with long, bounding steps, as rapidly as the gray wolf, I could no longer discredit my eyes. I recalled the suggestion of a human voice I had caught in the unearthly cry of the pack; recalled what Connell and Judson had told me of human footprints mingled with those of wolves in the trail the pack had left.

She was clad very lightly, to be abroad in the bitter cold of the winter night. Apparently, she wore only a torn, flimsy slip, of thin white silk, which hung from one shoulder, and came not quite to her knees. Her head was bare, and her hair, seeming in the moonlight to be an odd, pale yellow, was short and tangled. Her smooth arms and small hands, her legs, and even her flashing feet, were bare. Her skin was white, with a cold, leprous, bloodless whiteness. Almost as white as the snow.

And her eyes shone green.

They were like the gray wolf's eyes, blazing with a terrible emerald flame, with the fire of an alien, unearthly life. They were malevolent, merciless, hideous. They were cold as the cosmic wastes beyond the light of stars. They burned with a malicious intelligence, stronger and more fearful

than that of any being on earth.

Across her lips, and her cheeks of a labaster whiteness, was a darkly red and dripping smear, almost black by moonlight.

I stood like a wooden man, nerveless with incredulous horror.

On came the girl and the wolf, springing side-by-side through the snow. They seemed to have preternatural strength, an agility beyond that of nature.

As they came nearer, I received another shock of terror.

The woman's face was familiar, for all its dreadful pallor and the infernal evil of the green, luminous eyes, and the red stain on her lips and cheeks. She was a girl whom I had admired, whom I had even dreamed that I might come to love.

She was Stella Jetton!

This girl was the lovely daughter of Dr. Blake Jetton, whom, as I have said, my father had brought with him to this Texas ranch, to assist with his revolutionary experiments.

IT CAME TO ME that she had been changed in some fearful way.

"Stella!" I cried. More a scream of frightened, anguished disbelief, than a human voice, the name came from my fear-parched throat. I was startled at my own call, hoarse, inchoate, gasping.

The huge gray wolf came directly at me, as if it were going

to spring at my throat. But it stopped a dozen feet before me, crouching in the snow, watching me with alert and strange intelligence in its dreadful green eyes.

And the woman came even nearer, before she paused, standing with terrible eyes like those of the wolf—luminous and green.

The face, ghastly white, and fearfully red-stained as it was, was the face of Stella Jetton. But the eyes were not hers!

Then she spoke. The voice had some little of its old, familiar ring, but there was a new, strange note in it. Her voice bore the foreign, menacing mystery of the eyes and the leprous skin, a note that had a suggestion of the dismal, wailing ululation of the pack that had followed us.

"Yes, Stella Jetton," the voice said. "What are you called? Are you Clovis McLaurin? Did you receive a telegram?"

She did not know me, apparently. Even the wording of her sentences was a little strange, as if she were speaking a language with which she was not very familiar. The delightful, human girl I had known was fearfully changed.

It occurred to me that she must be afflicted with some form of insanity, which had given her the almost preternatural strength which she had displayed in running with the wolf-pack. Cases of lycan-

thropy, I thought, it must indeed be a singular case.

"Yes, I'm Clovis McLaurin," I said, in a shaken voice. "I got Dad's telegram three days ago. Tell me what's wrong—why he worded the message as he did!"

"Nothing is wrong, my friend," this strange woman said. "We merely desired your assistance with certain experiments, of a great strangeness, which we are undertaking to perform. Your father now waits at the ranch, and I came to conduct you to him."

This singular speech was almost incredible. I could accept it only on the assumption that the speaker suffered from some dreadful derangement of the mind.

"You came to meet me?" I exclaimed, fighting the horror that almost overwhelmed me. "Stella, you mustn't be out in the cold without more wraps. You must take my coat."

I began to strip off the garment. But, as I had somehow expected, she refused to accept it.

"No, I do not need it. The cold does not harm this body. And you must come with us, now. Your father waits for us at the house, to perform the great experiment."

She said *us*! It gave me new horror to notice that she thus classified the huge gaunt wolf with herself.

Then she sprang forward with an incredible agility, leaping through the snow in the direction

in which Judson and I had been traveling. With a naked, dead-white arm, she beckoned me to follow. And the great, gray wolf sprang behind me.

Nerved to sudden action, I recalled the half-loaded automatic in my hand. I snapped the fresh clip into position, jerked back the slide mechanism to get a cartridge into the breech, and then emptied the gun into that green-orbed wolf.

A STRANGE composure had come over me. My motions were calm enough, almost deliberate. I know that my hand did not shake. The wolf was standing still, only a few yards away. It is unlikely that I missed him at all, impossible that I missed him with every shot.

I know that I hit him several times, for I heard the bullets drive into his gaunt body, saw the animal jerk beneath their impact, and noticed gray hairs float from it in the moonlight.

But he did not fall. His terrible green eyes never wavered in their sinister stare of infernal evil.

Just as the gun was empty—it had taken me only a few seconds to fire the seven shots—I heard an angry, wolfish snarl from the woman. I had half turned when her white body came hurtling at me like a projectile.

I went down beneath her, instinctively raising an arm to guard

my throat. It is well that I did, for I felt her teeth sinking into my arm and shoulder, as we fell together into the snow.

I am sure that I screamed.

I fought at her madly, until I heard her strange, non-human voice again.

"You need not be afraid," it said. "We are not going to kill you. We wish you to aid with a greatly remarkable experiment. For that reason, you must come with us. Your father waits. The wolf is our friend, and will not harm you. And your weapon will not hurt it."

A curious, half-articulate yelp, came from the throat of the great wolf, which had not moved since I shot at it, as if it had understood her words and gave affirmation.

The woman was still upon me, holding me flat in the snow, her bared, bloody teeth above my face, her fingers sunk claw-like into my body with almost preternatural strength. A low, bestial, growling sound came from her throat, and then she spoke again.

"You will now come with us, to the house where your father waits, to perform the experiment?" she demanded in that terrible voice, with its suggestion of the wolf-pack's cry.

"I'll come," I agreed, relieved somewhat to discover that the pair of beasts did not propose to devour me on the spot.

The woman—I cannot call her

Stella, for except in body, she was not Stella!—helped me to my feet. She made no objection when I bent, and picked up the automatic, which lay in the snow, and slipped it into my coat pocket.

SHE AND THE gaunt gray wolf, which my bullets had so strangely failed to kill, leaped away together over the moonlit snow. I followed, floundering along as rapidly as I could, my mind filled with confused and terror-numbed conjecture.

There was now no doubt remaining in my mind that the woman thought herself a member of the wolf-pack, no doubt that she actually was a member. A curious sympathy certainly seemed to exist between her and the great gaunt wolf beside her.

It must be some form of lunacy, I thought, though I had never read of a lycanthrope whose symptoms were exaggerated to the terrible extent that hers appeared to be. It is well known that some maniacs have unnatural strength, but her feats of running and leaping across the snow were almost beyond reason.

But there was that about her which even the theory of insanity did not explain. The corpse-like pallor of her skin; the terrible green luminosity of her eyes; the way she spoke—as if English were an

unfamiliar tongue to her, but half mastered.

The pace set for me by the woman and the wolf was mercilessly rapid. Stumble along as best I could, I was unable to move as fast as they wished. Nor was I allowed to fall behind, for when I lagged, the wolf came back, and snarled at me menacingly.

Before I had floundered along many miles, my lungs were aching and I was half blind with fatigue I stumbled and sprawled in the soft snow a last time. My tortured muscles refused to respond when I tried to rise. I lay there, ready to endure whatever the wolf might do, rather than undergo the agony of further effort.

But this time the woman came back, I was half unconscious, but I realized vaguely that she was lifting me, raising me to her shoulders. After that, my eyes were closed; I was too weary to watch my surroundings. But I knew dimly, from my sensations of swaying, that I was being carried.

Presently the toxins of exhaustion overcame my best efforts to keep my senses. I fell into the deep sleep of utter fatigue, forgetting that my limbs were growing very cold, and that I was being borne upon the back of a woman endowed with the instincts of a wolf and the strength of a demon; a woman who, when I had last seen her, had been all human and lovable!

NEVER CAN I forget the sensations of my awakening. I opened my eyes upon gloom relieved but faintly by dim red light. I lay upon a bed or couch, swathed in blankets. Hands that even to my chilled body seemed ice-cold were chafing my arms and legs. And terrible greenish orbs were swimming above in the terrible crimson darkness, staring down at me, horribly.

Alarmed, recalling what had happened in the moonlight as a vague nightmare, I collected my scattered senses, and struggled to a sitting position among the blankets.

It is odd, but the first definite thing that came to my confused brain was an impression of the ugly green flowers in monotonous rows across the dingy, brown-stained wall paper. In the red light that filled the room they appeared unpleasantly black, but still they awakened an ancient memory. I knew that I was in the dining room of the old ranch house, where I had come to spend two years with my uncle Tom McLaurin, many years before.

The weirdly illuminated chamber was sparsely furnished. The couch upon which I lay stood against one wall. Opposite was a long table, with half a dozen chairs pushed under it. Near the end of

the room was a large heating stove, with a full scuttle of coal and a box of split pine kindling behind it.

There was no fire in the stove, and the room was very cold. My breath was a white cloud in that frosty atmosphere. The dim crimson light came from a small electric lantern standing on the long table. It had been fitted with a red bulb, probably for use in a photographer's dark room.

All those impressions I must have gathered almost subconsciously, for my horrified mind was absorbed with the persons in the room.

My father was bending over me, rubbing my hands; Stella was chafing my feet, which stuck out beneath the blankets.

And my father was changed as weirdly, as dreadfully, as the girl, Stella!

His skin was a cold, bloodless white—white with the pallor of death. His hands, against my own, felt fearfully cold—as cold as those of a frozen corpse. And his eyes, watching me with a strange, terrible alertness, shone with a greenish light.

His eyes were like Stella's—and like those of the great gray wolf.

AND THE WOMAN—the dread thing that had been lovely Stella—was unchanged. Her skin was still fearfully pallid, and her eyes strange and luminously green.

The stain was still on her paleface, appearing black in the somber crimson light.

There was no fire in the stove. But, despite the bitter cold of the room, the woman was still clad as she had been before, in a sheer slip of white silk, half torn from her body. My father—or that which had once been my father—wore only a light cotton shirt, with the sleeves torn off, and a pair of ragged trousers. His feet and arms were bare.

Another fearful thing I noticed. My breath, as I said, condensed in white clouds of frozen crystals, in the frigid air. But no white mists came from Stella's nostrils, or from my father's.

From outside, I could hear the dismal, uncanny keening of the running pack. And from time to time the two looked uneasily toward the door, as if anxious to go to join them.

I had been sitting up, staring confusedly and incredulously about, before my father spoke.

"We are glad to see you, Clovis," he said, rather stiffly, and without emotion, not at all in his usual jovial, affectionate manner. "You seem to be cold, but you will presently be normal again. We have surprising need of you, in the performance of an experiment, which we cannot accomplish without your assistance."

He spoke slowly, uncertainly,

as a foreigner might who has attempted to learn English from a dictionary. I was at a loss to understand it, even if I assumed that he and Stella both suffered from a mental derangement.

And his voice was somehow whining; it carried a note suggestive of the howling of the pack.

"You will help us?" Stella demanded in the same dreadfultones.

"Explain it! Please explain everything!" I burst out. "Or I'll go crazy! Why were you running with the wolves? Why are your eyes so bright and green, your skins so deathly white? Why are you both so cold? Why the red light? Why don't you have a fire?"

I babbled my questions, while they stood there in the strange room, and silently stared at me with their horrible eyes.

FOR MINUTES, perhaps, they were silent. Then an expression of crafty intelligence came into my father's eyes, and he spoke again in those fearful tones, with their ring of the baying pack.

"Clovis," he said, "you know we came here for purposes of studying science. And a great discovery has been ours to make; a huge discovery relating to the means of life. Our bodies, they are changed, as you appear to see. Better machines they have become; stronger they are. Cold harms them

not, as it does yours. Even our sight is better, so bright lights we no longer need.

"But we are yet lacking of perfect success. Our minds were changed, so that we do not remember all that once it had been ours to accomplish. And it is you whom we desire to be our assistant in replacing a machine of ours, that has been broke. It is you that we wish to aid us, so that to all humanity we may bring the gift of the new life, that is ever strong, and knows not death. All people we would change with the new science that it has been ours to discover."

"You mean you want to make the human race into monsters like yourselves?"

My father snarled ferociously, like a beast of prey.

"All men will receive the gift of life like ours," his strange voice said. "Death will be no more. And your aid is required by us—and it we will have!" There was intense, malefic menace in his tones. "It is yours to be our aid. You will refuse not!"

He stood before me with bared teeth and with white fingers hooked like talons.

"Sure, I'll help you," I contrived to utter, in a shaken voice. "I'm not a very brilliant experimenter, however." It appeared that to refuse would be a means of

committing very unpleasant suicide.

Triumphant cunning shone in those menacing green eyes, the cunning of the maniac who has just perpetrated a clever trick.

"You can come now, in order to see the machine?" Stella demanded.

"No," I said hastily, and sought reasons for delay. "I am cold. I must light a fire and warm myself. Then I am hungry, and very tired. I must eat and sleep." All of which was very true. My body had been chilled through, during my hours on the snow. My limbs were trembling with cold.

The two looked at each other. Unearthly sounds passed between them, incoherent, animal whinings. Such, instead of words, seemed to be their natural speech; the English they spoke seemed only an inaccurately and recently learned tongue.

"True," my father said to me again, in a moment. He looked at the stove. "Start a fire if you must. What you need is there?" He pointed inquiringly toward the coal and kindling, as if fire were something new and unfamiliar to him.

"We must go without," he added. "Light of fire is hurtful to us, as cold is to you. And in other room, called—" he hesitated per-

ceptibly, "kitchen, will be food. There we will wait."

He and the white girl glided silently from the room.

Shivering with cold, I hurried to the stove. All the coals in it were dead; there had been no fire in it for several days. I shook down the ashes, lit a ball of crumpled newspaper with a match I found in my pocket, dropped it on the grate, and filled the stove with pine and coal. In a few minutes I had a roaring fire, before which I crouched gratefully.

IN A FEW minutes the door was opened slowly. Stella first peering carefully, apparently to see if there was light in the room, stepped cautiously inside. The stove was tightly closed; no light escaped from it.

The pallid, green-eyed woman had her arms full of food, a curious assortment that had evidently been collected in the kitchen in a haphazard manner. There were two loaves of bread, a slab of raw bacon, an unopened can of coffee, a large sack of salt, a carton of oatmeal, a can of baking powder, a dozen tins of canned foods, and even a bottle of stove polish.

"You eat this?" she inquired, in her strangely animal voice, dropping the articles on the table.

It was almost ludicrous; and too, it was somehow terrible. She seemed to have no conception of

human alimentary needs.

Comfortably warm again, and feeling very hungry, I went over to the table, and examined the odd assortment. I selected a loaf of bread, a tin of salmon, and one of apricots, for my immediate use.

"Some of these things are to be eaten as they are," I ventured, wondering what her response would be. "And some of them have to be cooked."

"Cooked?" she demanded quickly. "What is that?"

Then, while I was silent, dazed with astonishment, she added, "Does it convey that they must be hot and bleeding from the animal?"

"No!" I cried. "No. To cook a food one heats it. Usually adding seasonings, such as salt. A rather complicated process, requiring considerable skill."

"I see," she said. "And you must consume such articles, to keep your body whole?"

I admitted that I did, and then remarked that I needed a can cutter, to get at the food in the tins. First inquiring about the appearance of the implement, she hurried to the kitchen, and soon returned with one.

Presently my father came back into the room. Both of them watched me with their strange green eyes as I ate. My appetite failed somewhat, but I drew the meal out as long as possible, in

order to defer whatever they might intend for me after I had finished.

Both of them asked many questions. Questions similar to Stella's query about cooking, touching subjects with which an ordinary child is familiar. But they were not stupid questions—no, indeed! Both of them evinced a cleverness that was almost preternatural. They never forgot, and I was astounded at their skill in piecing together the facts I gave them, to form others.

Their green eyes watched me very curiously when, unable to drag out the pretense of eating any longer, I produced a cigarette and sought a match to light it. Both of them howled, as if in agony, when the feeble yellow flame of the match flared up. They covered their eyes, and leaped back, cowering and trembling.

"Kill it!" my father snarled ferociously.

I flicked out the tiny flame, startled at its results.

They uncovered their terrible green eyes, blinking. It was several minutes before they seemed completely recovered from their amazing fear of the light.

"Make light no more when we are near," my father growled at me. "We will tear your body if you forget!" His teeth were bared; his lips curled like those of a wolf; he snarled at me frightfully.

Stella ran to an east window,

raised the blind, peered nervously out. I saw that the dawn was coming. She whined strangely at my father. He seemed uneasy, like an animal at bay. His huge green eyes rolled from side to side. He turned anxiously to me.

"Come," he said. "The machine which we with your aid will repair is in the cellar beneath the house. The day comes. We must go."

"I can't go," I said. "I'm dog tired; been up all night. I've got to rest, before I work on any machine. I'm so sleepy I can't think."

He whined curiously at Stella again, as if he were speaking in some strange wolf-tongue. She replied in kind, then spoke to me.

"If rest is needful to the working of your body, you may sleep till the light is gone. Follow."

SHE OPENED the door at the end of the room, led me into a dark hall, and from it into a small bedroom. It contained a narrow bed, two chairs, a dresser, and wardrobe trunk.

"Try not to go," she snarled warningly, at the door, "or we will follow you over the snow!"

The door closed and I was alone. A key grated ominously in the lock. The little room was cold and dark. I scrambled hastily into the bed, and for a time I lay there, listening.

The dreadful howling of the

wolfpack, which had never stilled through all the night, seemed to be growing louder, drawing nearer. Presently it ceased, with a few sharp, whining yelps, apparently just outside the window. The pack had come here, with the dawn!

As the increasing light of day filled the little room, I raised myself in the bed to scrutinize its contents again. It was a neat chamber, freshly papered. The dresser was covered with a gay silk scarf, and on it, in orderly array, were articles of the feminine toilet. A few dresses, a vivid beret, and a bright sweater were hanging under a curtain in the corner of the room. On the wall was a picture—of myself!

It came to me that this must be Stella's room, into which I had been locked to sleep until night had come again.

And I knew now that no mundane explanation, no form of insanity, could explain what I had seen and heard. The thought had been in my mind from the first, but I had tried to put it aside, looking for a simpler explanation. I had thought of Mars—and realized now that this was a symbol for alienness, something not of this world.

Stella and my father were possessed by alien entities, intelligent malevolent entities. The human personalities had been driven out, or taken over—and the usurping

entities wanted my help . . .

Presently I examined the windows with a view to escape. There were two of them, facing the east. Heavy wooden bars had been fastened across them, on the outside, so close together that I could not hope to squeeze between them. And a survey of the room revealed no object with which they could be easily sawed.

But I was too sleepy and exhausted to attempt escape. At thought of the ten weary miles to Hebron, through the thick, soft snow, I abandoned the idea. I knew that, tired as I already was, I could never cover the distance in the short winter day. And I shuddered at the thought of being caught on the snow by the pack.

I lay down again in Stella's clean bed, about which a slight fragrance of perfume still lingered, and was soon asleep. My slumber, though deep, was troubled. But no nightmare could be as hideous as the reality from which I had found a few hours' escape.

5

I SLEPT THROUGH most of the short winter day. When I woke it was sunset. Gray light fell athwart the illimitable flat desert of snow outside my barred windows, and the pale disk of the moon, near the full, was rising in the darkening eastern sky. No

human habitation was in view, in all the stretching miles of that white waste. I felt a sharp sense of utter loneliness.

I could look for no outside aid in coping with the strange and alarming situation into which I had stumbled. If I were to escape from these monsters who wore the bodies of those dearest to me, it must be by my own efforts. And in my hands alone rested the task of finding how to restore them to their old, dear selves.

Once more I examined the stout wooden bars across the windows. They seemed strongly nailed to the wall on either side. I found no tool that looked adequate to cutting them. My matches were still in my pocket, however, and it occurred to me that I might burn the bars. But there was no time for such an undertaking before the darkness would bring back my captors, nor did I relish the thought of attempting to escape with the pack on my trail.

I was hungry again, and quite thirsty also.

Darkness fell, as I lay there on the bed, among the intimate belongings of a lovely girl for whom I had owned tender feelings—waiting for her to come with the night, amid her terrible allies, to drag me to I knew not what dread fate.

The gray light of day faded imperceptibly into pale silvery moonlight.

Abruptly, without warning, the key turned in the lock.

Stella—or the alien entity that ruled the girl's fair body—glided with sinister grace into the room. Her green eyes were shining, and her skin was ghastly white.

"Immediately you will follow," came her wolfish voice. "The machine below awaits the aid for you to give in the great experiment. Quickly come. Your weak body, it is rested?"

"All right," I said. "I've slept, of course. But now I'm hungry and thirsty again. I've got to have water and something to eat before I tinker with any machine."

I was determined to postpone whatever ordeal lay before me as long as possible.

"Your body you may satisfy again," the woman said. "But take not too long!" she snarled warningly.

I followed her back to the dining room.

"Get water," she said, and glided out the door.

The stove was still faintly warm. I opened it, stirred the coals, dropped in more fuel. Soon the fire was roaring again. I turned my attention to the food I had left. The remainder of the salmon and apricots had frozen on the plates, and I set them over the stove to warm.

Soon Stella was back with a water bucket containing a bulging

mass of ice. Apparently surprised that I could not consume water in a solid form, she allowed me to set it on the stove to thaw.

While I waited, standing by the stove, she asked innumerable questions, many of them so simple they would have been laughable under less strange conditions, some of them concerning the latest and most recondite of scientific theories, her mastery of which seemed to exceed my own.

My father appeared suddenly, his corpse-white arms full of books. He spread them on the table, curtly bid me come look with him. He had Einstein's *The Meaning of Relativity*, Weyl's *Gravitation und Elektricitat*, and two of his own privately printed works. The latter were *Space-Time Tensors* and the volume of mathematical speculation entitled *Interlocking Universes* whose bizarre implications created such a sensation among those savants to whom he sent copies.

MY FATHER began opening these books, and bombarding me with questions about them, questions which I was often unable to answer. But the greater part of his queries related merely to grammar, or the meaning of words. The involved thought seemed easy for him to understand; it was the language which caused him difficulty.

His questions were exactly such as might be asked by a super-intellectual being from Mars, if he were attempting to read a scientific library without having completely mastered the language in which its books were written.

And his own books seemed as unfamiliar to him as those of the other scientists. But he ran through the pages with amazing speed, pausing only to ask an occasional question, and appeared to gain a complete mastery of the volume as he went.

When he released me, the food and water were warm. I drank, and then ate bread and salmon and apricots, as deliberately as I dared. I invited the two to share the food with me, but they declined abruptly. The volley of questions continued.

Then suddenly, evidently concluding that I had eaten enough, they started toward the door, commanding me to follow. I dared not do otherwise. My father paused at the end of the table and picked up the electric lantern, whose dimly glowing red bulb supplied the only light in the room.

Again we traversed the dark hall, and went out through a door in the rear of the fram building. As we stepped out upon the moonlit snow, I shuddered to hear once more the distant, wailing ululation of the pack, still with that terrible

note which suggested strained human vocal organs.

A few feet from us was the door of a cellar. The basement had evidently been considerably enlarged, quite recently, for huge mounds of earth lay about us, filling the back yard. Some of them were covered with snow, some of them black and bare.

The two led the way down the steps into the cellar, my father still carrying the electric lantern, which faintly illuminated the midnight space with its feeble, crimson glow.

The cellar was large, neatly plastered. It had not been itself enlarged, but a dark passage sloped down beside the door, to deeper excavations.

In the center of the floor stood the wreck of an intricate and unfamiliar mechanism. It had evidently been deliberately smashed—I saw an ax lying beside it, which must have been the means of the havoc. The concrete floor was littered with the broken glass of shattered electron tubes. The machine itself was a mass of tangled wires and twisted coils and bent magnets, oddly arranged outside a great copper ring, perhaps four feet in diameter.

The huge copper ring was mounted on its edge, in a metal frame. Before it was a stone step, placed as if to be used by one climbing through the ring. But, I

saw, it had been impossible for one actually to climb through, for on the opposite side was a mass of twisted apparatus—a great parabolic mirror of polished metal, with what appeared to be a broken cathode tube screwed into its center.

A most puzzling machine, it had been very thoroughly wrecked. Save for the huge copper ring, and the heavy stone step before it, there was hardly a part that was not twisted or shattered.

In the end of the cellar was a small motor-generator—a little gasoline engine connected to a dynamo—such as is sometimes used for supplying isolated homes with electric light and power. I saw that it had not been injured.

From a bench beside the wall, my father picked up a briefcase, from which he took a roll of blue prints, and a sheaf of papers bound in a manila cover. He spread them on the bench and set the red lantern beside them.

"This machine, as you see, has been, most unfortunately for us, wrecked," he said. "These papers tell the method of construction to be followed in the erection of such machines. Your aid we must have in deciphering what they convey. And the new machine will bring such great, strong life as we have to all your world."

"You say '*your world!*'?" I cried. "Then you admit, you

don't belong to this earth? You are a monster, who has stolen the body of my father!"

BOTH OF THEM snarled like beasts. They bared their teeth and glowered at me with their terrible green eyes. Then a crafty look came again into the man's orbs.

"No, my son," came his whining, animal tones. "A new secret of life have we discovered. Great strength it gives to our bodies. Death we fear no longer. But our minds are changed. Many things we do not remember. We must require your aid in reading this which we once wrote—"

"That's the bunk!" I exclaimed, "I don't believe it. And I'll be damned if I'll help repair the infernal machine, to make more human beings into monsters like you!"

Together they sprang toward me. Their eyes glowed dreadfully against their pallid skins. Their fingers were hooked like claws. Saliva drooled from their snarling lips, and naked teeth gleamed in the dim crimson radiance.

"Aid us you will!" cried my father. "Or your body will we most painfully destroy. We will eat it slowly, while you live!"

The horror of it broke down my reason. With a wild, terror-shaken scream, I dashed for the door.

It was hopeless, of course, for,

me to attempt escape from beings possessing such preternatural strength.

With startling, soul-blasting howls, they sprang after me together. They swept me to the cellar's floor, sinking their teeth savagely into my arms and body. For a few moments I struggled desperately, writhing and kicking, guarding my throat with one arm and striking blindly with the other.

Then they held me helpless. I could only curse, and scream a vain appeal for aid.

The woman, holding my arms pinioned against my sides, lifted me easily, flung me over her shoulder. Her body, where it touched mine, was as cold as ice. I struggled fiercely but uselessly as she started with me down the black, inclined passage, into the recent excavations beneath the cellar's floor.

Behind us, my father picked up the little red lantern, and the blueprints and sheets of specifications, and followed down the dark, slanting passage.

HELPLESS IN those preternaturally strong, corpse-cold and corpse-white arms, I was carried down narrow steps, to a high, subterranean hall. It was filled with a dim blood-red light, which came from no visible source, its angry,

forbidding radiance seeming to spring from the very air. The walls of the underground hall were smooth and black, of some unfamiliar ebon substance.

Several yards down that black, strangely illuminated passage I was carried. Then we came into a larger space. Its black roof, many yards above, was groined and vaulted, supported by a double row of massive dead-black pillars. Many dark, arched niches were cut into its walls. This greater hall, too, was sullenly illuminated by a ghastly scarlet light, which seemed to come from nowhere.

It was a strange, silent, awful place, a sort of cathedral of darkness, of evil and death. A sinister atmosphere of nameless terror seemed to emanate from its very midnight walls, like the stifling fumes of incense offered to some formless god of horror. The dusky red light might have come from unseen tapers burned in forbidden rites of blood and death. The dead silence itself seemed a tangible, evil thing, creeping upon me from ebon walls.

I was given little time to speculate upon the questions that it raised. What was the dead-black material of the walls? Whence came the lurid, bloody radiance? How recently had this strange temple of terror been made? And to what demoniac god was it consecrated? No opportunity had I to

seek answers to those questions, nor time even to recover from my natural astonishment at finding such a place beneath the soil of a Texas ranch.

The emerald-eyed woman who bore me dropped me to the black floor, against the side of a jet pillar, which was round and two feet thick. She whined shrilly, like a hungry dog. It was evidently a call, for two men appeared in the broad central aisle of the temple, which I faced.

Two men—or, rather, malevolent monstrosities in the bodies of men. Their eyes shone with green fires alien to our world, and their bodies, beneath their tattered rags of clothing, were fearfully white. One of them came toward me with a piece of frayed manila rope, which must have been a lasso they had found above.

Later it came to me that these two must be the mechanics from the city of Amarillo, who, Judson had told me on the evening of our fatal drive, had been employed here by my father. I had not yet seen Dr. Blake Jetton, Stella's father, who had been the chief assistant of my own parent in various scientific investigations—investigations which had borne dreadful fruit!

While the woman held me against the black pillar, the men seized my arms, stretched them behind it, and tied them with the rope.

I kicked out, struggled, cursed them, in vain. My body seemed but putty to their fearful strength. When my hands were tied behind the pillar, another length of the rope was dropped about my ankles and drawn tight about the ebon shaft.

I was helpless in this weird, subterranean temple, at the mercy of these four creatures who seemed to combine infernal super-intelligence with the strength and the nature of wolves.

"See the instrument which we are to build!" came the snarling voice of my father. Standing before me, with the roll of blueprints in his livid hands, he pointed at an object that I had not yet distinguished in the sullen, bloody gloom.

IN THE CENTER of the lofty, central hall of this red-lit temple, between the twin rows of looming, dead-black pillars, was a long, low platform of ebon stone. From it rose a metal frame—wrought like the frame of the wrecked machine I had seen in the cellar, above.

The frame supported a huge copper ring in a vertical position. It was far huger than the ring in the ruined mechanism; its diameter was a dozen feet or more. Its upper curve reached far toward the black, vaulted roof of the hall, glistening queerly in the ghastly red light.

Behind the ring, a huge, parabolic mirror of silvery, polished metal had been set up.

But the device was obviously unfinished.

The complex electron tubes, the delicate helixes and coils, the magnets, and the complicated array of wires, whose smashed and tangled remains I had observed about the wreck of the other machine, had not been installed.

"Look at that!" cried my father again. "The instrument that comes to let upon your earth the great life that is ours. The plan on this paper, we made. From the plan, we made the small machine, and brought to ourselves the life, the strength, the love of blood—"

"The love of blood!" My startled, anguished outcry must have been a shriek, for I was already nearly overcome with the brooding terror of my strange surroundings. I collapsed against the ropes, shaken and trembling with fear.

The light of cunning came once more into the glaring green eyes of the thing that had been my father.

"No, fear not!" he whined on. "Your language it is new to me, and I speak what I do not intend. Be not fearing—if you will do our wish. If you do not, then we will taste your blood."

"But the new life came only to few. Then the machine broke, be-

cause of one man. And our brains are changed, so that we remember not to read the plans that we made. Your aid is ours, to restore a new machine. To you and all your life!"

He stepped close to me, his green eyes burning malevolently. Before my eyes he unrolled one of the sheets which bore plans and specifications for the strange electron tubes, to be mounted outside the copper ring. From his lips came the curious, wolfish whine with which these monsters communicated with one another. One of the transformed mechanics stepped up beside him, carrying in dead-white hands the parts of such a tube—filaments, plate, grid, screens, auxiliary electrodes, and the glass tube in which they were to be sealed. The parts evidently had been made to fit the specifications—as nearly as these entities could comprehend those specifications with their imperfect knowledge of English.

"We make fit plans for these parts," my father whined. "If wrong, you must say where wrong. Describe how to put together. Speak quick, or die slowly!" He snarled menacingly.

Though I am by no means a brilliant physicist, I saw easily enough that most of the parts were useless, though they had been made with amazing accuracy. These beings seemed to have no

knowledge of the fundamental principles underlying the operation of the machine they were attempting to build, yet, in making these parts, they had accomplished feats that would have been beyond the power of our science.

The filament was made of metal, well enough—but was far too thick to be lit by any current, without that current wrecking the tube in which it were used. The grid was nicely made—of metallic radium! It was worth a small fortune, but quite useless in the electron tube. And the plate was evidently of pure fused quartz, shaped with an accuracy that astounded me; but that, too, was quite useless.

"Parts wrong?" my father barked excitedly in wolfish tones, his glowing green eyes evidently having read something in my face. "Indicate how wrong. Describe to make correct!"

I CLOSED MY lips firmly, determined to reveal nothing. I knew that it was through the wrecked machine that my father and Stella had been so dreadfully altered. I resolved that I would not aid in changing other humans into such hellish monsters. I was sure that this mechanism, if completed, would be a threat against all humanity.

My father snarled toward the woman.

She dropped upon all fours, and

sprang at me like a wolf, her beastly eyes gleaming green, her bare teeth glistening in the sullen red light, and she was hideously howling!

Her teeth caught my trousers, tore them from my leg from the middle of the right thigh downward. Then they closed into my flesh, and I could feel her teeth gnawing . . . gnawing . . .

She did not make a deep wound, though blood, black in the terrible red light, trickled from it down my leg toward the shoe—blood which, from time to time, she ceased the gnawing to lick up appreciatively. The purpose of it was evidently to cause me the maximum amount of agony and horror.

For minutes, perhaps, I endured it—for minutes that seemed ages.

The pain itself was agonizing: the steady gnawing of teeth into the flesh of my leg, toward the bone.

But that agony was less than the terror of my surroundings. The strange temple of black, with its black floor, black walls, black pillars, vaulted black ceiling. The dim, sourceless, blood-red light that filled it. The dreadful stillness—broken only by my groans, and by the slight sound of the gnawing teeth. The demoniac monster standing before me in the bldy of my father, staring at me with shining green eyes, holding the plans and the parts that the mechanic had brought, waiting for me to speak. But the most horrible thing was the

fact that the gnawing demon was the body of dear, lovely Stella!

She was now digging her teeth in with a crunching sound.

I writhed and screamed with agony. Sweat rolled from my body. I tugged madly against my bonds, strove to burst the rope that held my tortured leg.

Fierce, eager growls came wolf-like from the throat of the gnawing woman. Her leprosely pallid face was once more smeared with blood, as it had been when I first saw her. Occasionally she stopped the unendurable gnawing, to lick her lips with a dreadful satisfaction.

Finally I could stand it no longer. Even if the fate of all the earth depended upon me—as I thought it did—I could endure it no longer.

"Stop! Stop!" I screamed. "I'll tell you!"

Rather reluctantly, the woman rose, licking her crimson lips.

My father—I find myself continually calling the monster by that name, but it was *not* my father—again held the plans before my face, and displayed upon his palm the tiny parts for the electron tube.

It took all my will to draw my mind from the throbbing pain of the fresh wound in my leg. But I explained that the filament wire would have to be drawn much finer, that the radium would not do for the grid, that the plate must

be of a conducting metal, instead of quartz.

He did not easily understand my scientific terms. The name tungsten, for instance meant nothing to him until I had explained the qualities and the atomic number of the metal. That identified it for him, and he appeared really to know more about the metal than I did.

For long hours I answered his questions, and made explanations. A few times I thought of refusing to answer, again. But the memory of that unendurable gnawing always made me speak.

The scientific knowledge and skill displayed in the construction of the machine's parts, once the specifications were properly understood, astounded me. These monsters that had stolen these human bodies seemed to have remarkable scientific knowledge of their own, particularly in chemistry and certain branches of physics—though electricity and magnetism, and the modern theories of relativity and equivalence, seemed new to them, probably because they came from a world whose natural phenomena are not the same as ours.

They brought, from one of the chambers opening into the great hall, an odd, glistening device, consisting of connected bulbs and spheres of some bright, transparent crystal. First, a lump of limestone rock, which must have been dug up in the making of this

underground temple, was dropped into a large lower globe. Slowly it seemed to dissolve, forming a heavy, iridescent, violet-colored gas.

Then, whenever my father or one of the others wished to make any object—a metal plate or grid, a coil of wire, an insulating button, anything needed in building the machine—a tiny pattern of it was skilfully formed of a white, soft, wax-like substance.

The white pattern was placed in one of the crystal bulbs, and the heavy violet gas—which must have been disassociated protons and electrons from the disrupted limestone—was allowed to fill the bulb through one of the numerous transparent tubes.

The operator watched a little gauge, and at the right instant, removed from the bulb—not the pattern, but the finished object, formed of any desired element!

The process was not explained to me, but I am sure that it was one of building up atoms from the constituent positive and negative electrons—a process just the reverse of disintegration, by which radium decomposes into lead. First such simple atoms as those of hydrogen and helium. Then carbon, or silicon, or iron. Then silver, if one desired it, or gold! Finally radium, or uranium, the heaviest of metals. The object was removed whenever the atoms had reached

the proper number to form the element required.

With this marvelous device, whose accomplishments exceeded the wildest dreams of the alchemist, the construction of the huge machine in the center of the hall proceeded with amazing speed, with a speed that filled me with nothing less than terror.

It occurred to me that I might delay the execution of the monsters' dreadful plan by a trick of some kind. Racking my weary and pain-clouded brain, I sought for some ruse that might mislead my clever opponents. The best idea that came to me was to give a false interpretation of the word "vacuum". If I could keep its true meaning from my father, he would leave the air in the tubes, and they would burn out when the current was turned on. When he finally asked the meaning of the word, I said that it signified a sealed or enclosed space.

But he had been consulting scientific works, as well as my meager knowledge. When the words left my lips, he sprang at me with a hideous snarl. His teeth sought my throat. But for a very hurried pretense of alarmed stupidity, my part in the dreadful adventure might have come to a sudden end. I protested that I had been sincere, that my mind was weary and I could not remember scientific

facts, that I must eat and sleep again.

Then I sagged forward against the ropes, head hanging. I refused to respond, even to threats of further torture. And my exhaustion was scarcely feigned, for I had never undergone a more trying day—a day in which one horror followed close upon another.

Finally they cut me loose. The woman carried me out of the sullen crimson light of the temple, up the narrow passage, and into the house again; I was almost too weak to walk alone. As we came out upon the snow, the distant, keening cry of the pack broke once more upon my ears.

The pale disk of the moon was rising, cold and silvery, in the east, over the illimitable plain of snow. It was night again!

I had been in the subterranean temple for more than twenty-four hours.

7

AGAIN I WAS in the little room that had been Stella's among her intimate possessions, catching an occasional suggestion of her perfume. It was a small room, clean and chaste, and I had a feeling that I was invading a sacred place. But I had no choice in the matter, for the windows were barred, and the door locked behind me.

Stella — or, I should say, the were-woman — had let me stop in the other room to eat and drink again. She had even let me find the medicine cabinet and get a bottle of antiseptic to use in the wound on my leg.

Now sitting on the bed in a shaft of cold, argent moonlight, I applied the stinging liquid, and then bound the place with a bandage torn from a clean sheet.

Then I got to my feet and went to the window: I was determined to escape if escape were possible, or end my life if it were not. I had no intention of going back alive to the hellish red-lit temple.

But the quavering, dismal, howling of the pack came faintly to my ears, as I reached the window, setting me trembling with horror. I gazed fearfully across the fantastic desert of silvery snow, bright in the opalescent haze of moonlight.

Then I glimpsed moving green eyes, and I cried out.

Below the window was a huge, lean gray wolf, pacing deliberately up and down, across the glistening snow. From time to time he lifted his head, stared straight at my windows with huge, malevolent eyes.

A sentinel set to watch me!

With my hopeless despair came a leaden weight of weariness. I felt suddenly exhausted, physically and mentally. I stumbled to the

bed, crept under the covers without troubling to remove my clothing, and fell almost instantly asleep.

I AWOKE UPON a gray, cold day. A chill wind was whistling eerily about the old house, and the sky was gloomy with steel-blue clouds. I sprang out of bed, feeling much refreshed by my long sleep. For a moment, despite the dreary day, I was conscious of an extraordinary sense of relief; it seemed, for the merest instant, as if all that had happened to me was a horrible nightmare, from which I was waking. Then recollection came, with a dull pain in my wounded leg.

I wondered why I had not been carried back into the terrible temple of blood-red gloom before the coming of day; perhaps I must have been sleeping too soundly to be roused.

Recalling the gray wolf, I looked nervously out through the window. It was gone, of course, the monsters seemed unable to endure the light of day, or any other save the terrible crimson dusk of the temple.

I wrapped a blanket about my shoulders, for it was extremely cold, and I set about at once to escape from the room. I was determined to win my liberty or die in the attempt.

First I examined the windows again. The bars outside them,

though of wood, were quite strong. My utmost strength failed to break any one of them. I could find nothing in the room with which they might be cut or worn in twain, without hours of labor.

Finally I turned to the door. My kicks and blows failed to make any impression upon its sturdy panels. The lock seemed strong, and I had neither skill nor tools for picking it.

But, while I stood gazing at the lock, an idea came to me.

I still had the little automatic, and two extra clips of ammunition. My captors had shown only disdain for the little weapon, and I had rather lost faith in it after its puzzling failure to kill the gray wolf.

Now I backed to the other side of the room, drew it, and deliberately fired three shots into the lock. When I first tried the door again, it seemed as impassable as ever. I worked upon it, twisting the knob, again and again. There was a sudden snap, and the door swung open.

I was free. If only I could reach a place of safety before darkness brought out the weird pack!

In the old dining room I paused to drink, and to eat scantily. Then I left the house by the front door, for I dared not go near the mouth of that hell-burrow behind the house, even by day. In fearful,

desperate haste, I set out across the snow.

The little town of Hebron, I knew, lay ten miles away, directly north. Few landmarks were visible above the thick snow, and the gray clouds hid the sun. But I plodded along beside a barbed wire fence, which I knew would guide me.

Slowly the time-yellowed ranch house, an ugly, rambling structure with a gray shingle roof, dwindled upon the white waste behind me. The outbuildings, resembling the house, though looking smaller, more ancient and more dilapidated, drew toward it to form a single brown speck upon the endless desolation of the snow-covered plain.

The crust upon the snow, though frozen harder than upon the ill-fated night of my coming, was still too thin to support my weight. It broke beneath my feet at every step, and I sank ankle-deep in the soft snow beneath.

My progress was a grim, heart-breaking struggle. My strength had been drained by the nerve-racking horrors and exhausting exertions of the past few days. Soon I was gasping for breath, and my feet felt leaden-heavy. There was a dull, intolerable ache in the wound on my leg.

If the snow had been hard enough to support my weight, so that I could run, I might have reached Hebron before dark. But,



sinking deep into it at every step, it was impossible for me to move rapidly.

I must not have covered over half the distance to Hebron, when the gloom of the gray, cheerless day seemed to settle upon me. I realized, with a chill of fatal horror, that it had not been early morning when I set out; my watch had stopped, and since the leaden clouds had obscured the sun, I had no gauge of time.

I must have slept through half the day or more, exhausted as I had been by the day and night of torture in the dark temple. Night was upon me, when I was still far short of my destination.

Nearly dead with fatigue, I had more than once been almost on the point of stopping to rest. But terror lent me fresh strength. I plodded on as fast as I could, but forcing myself to keep from run-



*illustration by
Sewell*

ning, which would burn up my energy too soon.

ANOTHER MILE, perhaps, I had covered, when I heard the the weird, blood-congealing voice of the pack.

The darkness, for a time, had

been intense, very faintly relieved by the ghostly gleam of the snow. But the clouds had lightened somewhat, and the light of the rising moon shone through them, casting eldritch shadows of silver on the level snow.

At first the dreadful baying was

very distant, low and moaning and hideous with the human vocal note it carried. But it grew louder. And there was something in it of sharp, eager yelping.

I knew that the pack which had run down Judson and me had been set upon my trail.

The terror, the stark, maddening, soul-earing horror that seized me, is beyond imagination. I shrieked uncontrollably. My hands and body felt alternately hot and fevered, and chilled with a cold sweat. A harsh dryness roughened my throat. I reeled dizzyly, and felt the pounding of my pulse in all my body.

And I ran.

Madly, wildly. Ran with all my strength. Ran through the thick snow faster than I had thought possible. But in a few moments, it seemed I had used up all my strength.

I was suddenly sick with fatigue, swaying, almost unable to stand. Red mists, shot with white fire, danced in front of my eyes. The vast plain of snow whirled about me fantastically.

And on and on I staggered. When each step took all my will. When I felt that I must collapse in the snow, and fought with all my mind for the strength to raise my foot again.

All the time, the fearful baying was drawing nearer, until the wail-

ing, throbbing sound of it drummed and rang in my brain.

Finally, unable to take another step, I turned and looked back.

For a few moments I stood there, swaying, gasping for breath. The weird, nerve-blasting cry of the pack sounded very near, but I could see nothing. Then, through the clouds, a broad, ghostly shaft of moonlight fell athwart the snow behind me. And I saw the pack.

I saw them. The pinnacle of horror!

Gray wolves, leaping, green-eyed and gaunt. And strange human figures among them, racing with them. Chill, soulless emerald orbs staring. Bodies ghastly pallid, clad only in tattered rags. Stella, bounding at the head of the pack.

My father, following. And other men. All green-orbed, leprously white. Some of them frightfully mutilated.

Some so torn they should have been dead!

Judson, the man who had brought me out from Hebron, was among them. His livid flesh hung in ribbons. One eye was gone, and a green fire seemed to sear the empty socket. His chest was fearfully lacerated. And the man was — eviscerated!

Yet his hideous body leaped beside the wolves.

And others were as dreadful.

One had no head. A black mist seemed gathered above the jutting, lividly white stump of his neck, and in it glowed malevolently—two green eyes!

A woman ran with them. One arm was torn off, her naked breasts were in ribbons. She ran with the rest, green eyes glowing, mouth wide open, baying with other members of the pack.

And now I saw a horse in that grotesque company. A powerful, gray animal, he was, and he came with tremendous leaps. Its eyes, too, were glowing green—glowing with the malignant fire of an evil intelligence not normally of this earth. This was one of Judson's animals, changed as dreadfully as he and all the others had been. Its mouth yawned open, with yellow teeth glistening, and it howled madly with the pack.

Swiftly, hideously, they closed in upon me. The weird host sprang toward me from all directions—gray wolves, men, and horse. Eyes glaring, teeth bared, snarling, the hellish horde came closer.

The horror of it was too much for my mind. A merciful wave of darkness overcame me as I felt myself reeling to fall upon the snow.

I AWOKE WITHIN the utter stillness of a tomb. For a little time I lay with eyes closed, analyzing the sensations of my chilled, aching

body, conscious of the dull, throbbing pain from my wounded leg. I shuddered at recollection of the fearful experiences of the past few days, endured again the overwhelming horror of the moment when the pack—wolves and men and horse, frightfully mutilated, eyes demoniacally green—had closed in upon me on the moonlit snow. For some time I did not dare to open my eyes.

At last, nerving myself against the new horrors that might surround me, I raised my lids.

I looked into the somber, crimson radiance of the ebon-pillared temple. Beside a dull jet wall I lay, upon a pile of rags, with a blanket thrown carelessly over me. Beyond the row of massive, black, cylindrical pillars, I saw the great, strange machine, with the huge copper ring glistening queerly in the dim, bloody light. The polished mirror behind it seemed flushed with a living glow of molten rubies, and the many electron tubes, now mounted in their sockets, gleamed redly. The mechanism appeared to be near completion; livid, green-orbed figures were busy about it, moving with a swift, mechanical efficiency. It struck me abruptly that they moved more like machines than like living beings. My father, Stella, the two mechanics.

For many minutes I lay very still, watching them covertly. Evi-

dently they had brought me down into this subterranean chamber, so that I would have no chance to repeat my escape. I speculated upon the possibility of creeping along the wall to the ascending passage, dashing through it. But there was little hope that I could do it unseen. And I had no way of knowing whether it might be night or day; it would be folly to run out into the darkness. I felt the little automatic still under my arm; they had not troubled to remove a weapon which they did not fear.

Suddenly, before I had dared to move, I saw my father coming across the black floor toward me. I could not repress a tremor, at closer sight of his deathly pallid body and sinister, baleful greenish eyes. I lay still, trying to pretend sleep.

I FELT HIS ice-cold fingers close upon my shoulder; roughly I was drawn to my feet.

"Further assistance from you must be ours," whined his wolfish voice. "And not again will you be brought back living, should you be the fool to run!" His whine ended with an ugly snarl.

He dragged me across toward the fantastic mechanism that glistened in the grim, bloody radiance.

I quailed at the thought of being bound to the black pillar again.

"I'll help!" I cried. "Do anything you want. Don't tie me up, for God's sake! Don't let her gnaw me!" My voice must have become a hysterical scream. I fought to calm it, cudgeled my brain for arguments.

"It would kill me to be tied again," I pleaded wildly. "And if you leave me free, I can help you with my hands!"

"Be free of bonds, then," my father whined. "But also remember! You go, and we bring you back not alive!"

He led me up beside the great machine. One of the mechanics, at a shrill, wolfish whine from him, unrolled a blueprint before me. He began to ask questions regarding the wiring to connect the many electron tubes, the coils and helixes and magnets, all ranged about the huge copper ring.

His strange brain seemed to have no conception of the nature of electricity; I had to explain the fundamentals. But he grasped each new fact with astounding quickness, seemed to see the applications instinctively.

It soon developed that the great mechanism was practically finished; in an hour, perhaps, the wiring was completed.

"Now what yet is to be constructed?" my father whined.

I realized that no provision had been made for electricity to light the tubes and energize the mag-

nets. These beings apparently did not even know that a source of power was necessary. This, I thought, was another chance to stop the execution of their hellish plan.

"I don't know," I said. "So far as I can see, the machine now fits the specifications. I know nothing else to do."

He snarled something to one of the mechanics, who produced the bloody rope with which I had previously been bound. Stella sprang toward me, her lips curled in a leering animal snarl, her white teeth gleaming.

Uncontrollable terror shook me, weakened my knees until I reeled.

"Wait! Stop!" I screamed. "I'll tell if you won't tie me!"

They halted.

"Speak!" my father barked. "Quickly describe!"

"The machine must have power. Electricity?"

"From what place comes electricity?"

"There is a motor generator up in the cellar, where the other machine is. That might do."

He and the monster that had been Stella hurried me down the black-pillared hall, and up the indined passage to the old cellar. He carried the red-glowing electric lantern. In the cellar I showed them the generator and attempted a rough explanation of its operation.

Then he and the woman bent and caught the metal base of the unit. With their incredible strength, they lifted it quite easily and carried it toward the passage. They made me walk ahead of them as we returned to the machine in the black hall—blasting another hope for a chance to make a dash for the open.

Just as they were placing the heavy machine—gasoline engine and dynamo, which together weighed several hundred pounds—on the black platform beside the strange, gigantic mechanism, there came an interruption.

From the passage came the rustle of feet, and mingled whining, snarling sounds such as the monsters seemed to use for communication. And in the vague, blood-red light, between the tall rows of great black pillars, appeared the pack!

Huge, gaunt wolves there were. Frightfully mutilated men—Judson, and the others that I had seen. The gray horse. All their eyes were luminously green—alight with a dreadful, malevolent fire.

Human lips were crimsoned. Scarlet smeared the gray wolves' muzzles, and even the long nose and gray jaws of the horse. And they carried—the catch!

OVER JUDSON'S livid, lacerated shoulders was hung the torn, limp bleeding body of a woman—

his wife! One of the gaunt gray wolves had the hideously mangled body of a man across his back, holding it in place with jaws turned sidewise. Another had the body of a spotted calf. Two more carried in red-dripping jaws the lax gray bodies of coyotes. And one of the men bore upon his shoulder the remains of a huge gray wolf.

The dead, torn, mutilated specimens were dropped in a horrible heap in the wide central aisle of the jet-pillared temple, near the strange machine, like an altar of death. Dark blood flowed from it over the black floor, congealing in thick, viscid clots.

"To these we bring life," my father snarled at me, jerking his head toward the dreadful, mangled heap.

Shuddering and dazed with horror, I sank on the floor, covering my eyes. I was nauseated, sick. My brain was reeling, fogged, confused. It refused to dwell upon the meaning of this dreadful scene.

The mad, fearful, demoniac thing that had been my father jerked me roughly to my feet, dragged me toward the motor generator, and began plying me with questions about its operation, about how to connect it with the strange mechanism of the copper ring.

I struggled to answer his questions, trying vainly to forget my horror in the work.

Soon the connection was com-

pleted. Under my father's directions, I examined the gasoline engine, saw that it was supplied with fuel and oil. Then he attempted to start it, but failed to master the technique of choking the carburetor. Under constant threat of the blood-darkened rope and the were-woman's gnawing fangs, I labored with the little motor until it coughed a few times, and fell to firing steadily.

Then my father made me close the switch, connecting the strange machine with the current from the generator. A faint, shrill humming came from the coils. The electron tubes glowed dimly.

And a curtain of darkness seemed suddenly drawn across the copper ring. Blackness seemed to flow from the queer tube behind it, to be reflected into it by the polished mirror. A disk of dense utter darkness filled the ring.

FOR A FEW moments I stared at it in puzzled wonder.

Then, as my eyes became slowly sensitized, I found that I could see through it — see into a dread, nightmare world.

The ring had become an opening into another world of horror and darkness.

The sky of that alien world was unutterably, inconceivably black; blacker than the darkest midnight. It had no stars, no luminary; no faintest gleam relieved its terrible, oppressive intensity.

A vast reach of that other world's surface lay in view, beyond the copper ring. Low, worn, and desolate hills, that seemed black as the somber sky. Between them flowed a broad and stagnant river, whose dull and sullen waters shone with a vague and ghostly luminosity, with a pale glow that was somehow unclean and noisome.

And upon those low and ancient hills, that were rounded like the bloated breasts of corpses, was a loathsome vegetation. Hideous, obscene travesties of normal plants, whose leaves were long, narrow, snake-like, with the suggestion of ugly heads. With a dreadful, unnatural life, they seemed to writhe, lying in rotting tangles upon the black hills, and dragging in the foul, lurid waters of the stagnant river. Their thin reptilian, tentacular vines and creepers glowed with a pale and ghastly light, lividly greenish.

And upon a low black hill, above the river, and the writhing, obscene jungle, was what must have been a city. A sprawled and hideous mass of red corruption. A foul splash of dull crimson pollution.

This was no city, perhaps, in our sense of the word. It seemed to be a sort of cloud of foul, blood-hued darkness, trailing repulsive tentacles across the low black hill; a smear of evil crimson mist. Mad and repulsive knobs and warts

rose about it, in grotesque mockery of spires and towers. It was motionless. And I knew instinctively that unclean and abominable life, sentience, reigned within its hideous scarlet contamination.

My father mounted to the black stone step between the copper ring, and stood there howling weirdly and hideously, into that world of darkness.

In answer, the sprawled, nightmare city seemed to stir. Dark things—masses of fetid, reeking blackness—seemed to creep from its ugly protuberances, to swarm toward us through the filth of the writhing, glowing vegetation.

The darkness of evil concentrate, creeping from that nightmare world into ours !

For long moments the utter, insane horror of it held me paralyzed and helpless. Then something nerved me with the abrupt, desperate determination to revolt against my fearful masters, despite the threat of the bloody rope.

I tore my eyes from the dreadful attraction that seemed to draw them toward the foul, sprawled city of bloody darkness, in that hideous world of unthinkable evil.

Realization came to me that I stood alone, unguarded. The green eyes of the monsters about me were fixed in avid fascination upon the ring through which that nightmare

world was visible. None of them seemed aware of me.

If only I could wreck the machine, before those creeping horrors of darkness came through into our world! I started forward instinctively, then paused, realizing that it might be difficult to do great damage to it with my bare hands, before the monsters saw me and attacked.

Then I thought of the little automatic in my pocket, which I had been permitted to keep with me. Even though its bullets could not harm the monsters, they might do considerable damage to the machine.

I snatched it out and began firing deliberately at the dimly glowing electron tubes. As the first one was shattered, the image of that hideous, nightmare world flickered and vanished. The huge, polished mirror was once more visible beyond the copper ring.

For the time being, at least, those rankling shapes of black and utter evil were shut out of our world!

As I continued to fire, shattering the electron tubes and the other most delicate and most complicated parts of the great mechanism, a fearful, soul-chilling cry came from the startled monsters in human and animal bodies.

Suddenly the creatures sprang toward me, over the black floor, howling hideously.

IT WAS THE yellow, stabbing spurts of flame from the automatic that saved me. At first the fearfully transformed beasts and men had leaped at me, howling with the agony that light seemed to cause them. I kept on firing, determined to do all the damage possible before they bore me down.

And abruptly they fell back away from me, wailing dreadfully, hiding their unearthly green eyes, slinking behind the massive black pillars.

When the gun was empty, some of them came toward me again. But still they seemed shaken, weakened, uncertain of movement. In nervous haste, I fumbled in my pockets for matches—I had not realized before how they were crippled by light.

I found only three, all, apparently, that I had left.

The monsters, recovered from the effect of the gun flashes, were leaping across toward me, through the sullen, blood-red gloom, as I struggled desperately to make a light.

The first match broke in my fingers.

But the second flared into yellow flame. The monsters, almost upon me, sprang back, wailing in agony again. As I held the tiny, feeble flame aloft, they cowered, howl-

ing, in the flickering shadows cast by the huge, ebon pillars.

My confused, horror-dazed mind was abruptly cleared and sharpened by hope of escape. With the light to hold them back, I might reach the open air.

And to my quickened mind it came abruptly that it must be day above. It was morning, and the pack had been driven back to the burrow by the light of the coming sun!

As swiftly as I could, without extinguishing the feeble flame of the match with the wind of my motion, I advanced down the great hall. I kept in the middle of the wide central aisle, afraid that my enemies were slinking along after me in the shadows of the pillars.

Before I reached the passage which lead to the surface, a stronger breath of air caught the feeble orange flame. It flickered out. Dusky crimson gloom fell about me once more, with baleful green eyes moving in it, in the farther end of the temple. The howling rose again, angrily. I heard swiftly padding feet.

Only one of the three matches was left.

I bent, scratched it very carefully on the black floor and held it above my head.

A new wailing of pain came from the monsters; they fell back again.

I found the end of the passage,

rushed through it, guarding precious flame in a cupped hand.

In the great hall behind me, the blood-chilling wail of the pack rose again. I heard the monsters surging toward the passage.

By the time I had reached the old cellar, from whose wall the slanting tunnel had been dug, the match was almost consumed. I turned, let its last dying rays shine down the passage. Dreadful cries of agony and terror came again; I heard the monsters retreating from the tunnel.

The match suddenly went out.

In the mad haste I blundered heavily into the wall. I found the steps that led to the surface and rushed up them desperately.

I heard the howling pack running up the passage, moving far swifter than I was able to do.

At last my hand touched the under surface of the wooden door, above the steps. Beyond, I knew, was the golden light of day.

And at the same instant, corpse-cold fingers closed about my ankle, in a crushing, powerful grasp.

Confulsively, I thrust upward with my hand.

The door flew up, slammed crashingly beside the opening. Above was soft, brilliant azure sky. In it the white morning sun blazed blindingly. Its hot radiance brought tears to my eyes, accustomed as they were to the dim crimson light of the temple.

Fearful, agonized animal wailing sounds came again from behind me.

The grasp on my ankle tightened convulsively, then relaxed.

LOOKING BACK, I saw Stella on the steps at my feet, cowering, writhing as if in unbearable agony, animal screams of pain coming from her lips. It seemed that the burning sunlight had struck her down, that she had been too much weakened to retreat as those behind her had done.

Abruptly she seemed to me a lovely, suffering girl—not a demoniac monster. Pity for her—even, perhaps, love—came over me in a tender wave. If I could save her, restore her to her true self!

I ran back down the steps, seized her by the shoulders, started to carry her up into the light. Deathly cold and deathly white her body still was. And still it had a vestige of that unnatural strength.

She writhed in my arms, snarling, slashing at my body with her teeth. For a moment her green eyes smoldered malevolently at me. But as the sunlight struck them she closed them, howling with agony, and tried to shield them with her arm.

I carried her up the steps, into the brilliant sunlight.

First I thought of closing the cellar door, and trying to fasten it.

Then I realized that the light of day, shining down the passage, would hold back the monsters more effectually than any locked door.

It was still early morning. The sun had been up no more than an hour. The sky was clear, and the sunshine glittered with blinding, prismatic brilliance on the snow. The air, however, was still cold; there had been no thawing, nor would there be until the temperature had moderated considerably.

As I stood there in the blaze of sunlight, holding Stella, a strange change came over her. The fierce snarling and whining sounds that came from her throat slowly died away. Her writhing, convulsive struggles weakened, as though a tide of alien life were ebbing from her body.

There was a sudden last convolution. Then her body was lax, limp.

Almost immediately, I noticed a change in color. The fearful, corpselike pallor slowly gave place to the normal pinkish flush of healthy life. The strange, unearthly chill was gone; I felt a glow of warmth where her body was against mine.

Then her breast heaved. She breathed. I felt the slow throbbing of her heart. Her eyes were still closed as she lay inert in my arms, like one sleeping. I freed one of my hands and gently lifted a long-lashed lid.

The eye was clear and blue—normal again. The blaeful, greenish fire was gone!

In some way, which I did not then understand, the light of day had purified the girl, had driven from her the fierce, unclean lifethat had possessed her body.

"Stella! Stella! Wake up!" I cried. I shook her a little. But she did not rouse. Still she seemed sleeping heavily.

Realizing that she would soon be chilled, in the cold air, I carried her into the house, into her own room, where I had been imprisoned, and laid her on the bed, covering her with blankets. Still she appeared to be sleeping.

For an hour, perhaps, I tried to rouse her from the profound syncope or coma in which she lay. I tried everything that experience and the means at hand made available. And still she lay insensible.

A most puzzling situation. Stella—the real Stella—had been dispossessed of her body by some foul, alien being. The alien, evil life had been killed by the light, and still she had not returned.

AT LAST IT occurred to me to try hypnotic influence—I am a fair hypnotist, and have made a deep study of hypnotism and allied mental phenomena. A forlorn hope, pe-peared so deep. I was driven to clutch at any straw.

Exerting all my will to recall her mind, placing my hand upon her smooth brow, or making slow passes over her still, pale, lovely face, I commanded her again and again to open her eyes.

And suddenly, when I was almost on the point of new despair, her eyelids flickered, lifted. Of course, it may have been a natural awakening, though a most unusual one, instead of the result of my efforts. But her blue eyes opened and stared up at me.

But still she was not normally awake. No life or feeling was revealed in the azure depths of her eyes. They were clouded, shadowed with sleep. Their opening seemed to have been a mechanical answer to my commands.

"Speak. Stella, my Stella, speak to me!" I cried.

Her pale lips parted. From them came low, sleep-drugged tones.

"Clovis." She spoke my name in that small, colorless voice.

"Stella, what has happened to you and my father?" I cried.

And here is what she told me, in that tiny, toneless voice. I have condensed it somewhat, for many times her voice wandered wearily, died away, and I had to prompt her, question her, almost force her to continue.

"My father came here to help Dr. McLaurin with his experiment," she began, slowly, in a low monotone, "I did not understand

all of it, but they sought for other worlds besides ours. Other dimensions, interlocking with our own. Dr. McLaurin had been working out his theory for many years, basing his work upon the new mathematics of Weyl and Einstein.

"Not simple is our universe. Worlds upon worlds lie side by side, like the pages of a book—and each world unknown to all the others. Strange worlds touching, spinning side by side, yet separated by walls not easily broken down.

In vibration is the secret. For all matter, all light, all sound, all our universe, is of vibration. All material things are formed of vibrating particles of electricity—electrons. And each world, each universe, has its own order of vibration. And through each, all unknown and unseen, are the myriad other worlds and universes vibrating, each with an order of its own.

"Dr. McLaurin knew by mathematics that these other worlds must exist. It was his wish to explore them. Here he came, to be alone, with none to pry into his secrets. Aided by my father, and other men, he toiled through years to build his machine.

"A machine, if successful, would change the vibration rate of matter and of light. To change it from the order of our dimension, to those of others. With it, he might see into those myriad other worlds in space

beside our own, might visit them.

"The machine was finished. And through its great copper ring, we saw another world. A world of darkness, with midnight sky. Loathsome, lividly green plants writhed like reptilian monstrosities upon its black hills. Evil, alien life teemed upon it.

"Dr. McLaurin went through into that dark world. The horror of it broke down his mind. A strange madman, he came back. His eyes were green and shining, and his skin was very white.

"And things he brought back with him—clinging, creeping things of foul blackness, that stole the bodies of men and beasts. Evil, living things, that are the masters of the black dimension. One crept into me, and took my body. It ruled me, and I know only like a dim dream what it made my body do. To it, my body was but a machine.

"Dim dreams. Terrible dreams. Dreaming of running over the snow, hunting for wolves. Dreams of bringing them back, for the black things to flow into, and make live again. Dreams of torturing my father, whom no black thing took, at first.

"FATHER WAS tortured, gnawed. My body did it. But I did not do it. I was far away. I saw it only dimly, like a bad dream. One of the black creatures

had come into my body, taken it from me.

"New to our world were the black things. Light slays them, for it is a force strange to their world, against which they have no armor. And so they dug a deep place, to slink into by day.

"The ways of our world they knew not; nor the language; nor the machines. They made Father teach them; teach them to speak; to read books; to run the machine through which they came. They plan to make black clouds to hide the sun forever, so our world will be as dark as their own. They plan to seize the bodies of all men and animals, to use as machines to do that thing.

"When Father knew the plan, he would not tell them more. So my body gnawed him — while I looked on from afar, and could not help. Then he pretended to be in accord with them. They let him loose. He smashed the machine with an ax, so no more evil things could come through. Then he blew off his head with a gun, so they could not torture him, and make him aid them again.

"The black things could not themselves repair the machine. But in letters they learned of Clovis McLaurin, son of Dr. McLaurin. He, too, knew of machines. They sent for him, to torture him as Father had been tortured. Again my mind was filled with grief, for

he was dear to me. But my body gnawed him, while he aided the black things to build a new machine.

"Then he broke it. And then . . . then . . ."

Her tiny, toneless voice died wearily away. Her blue eyes, still clouded with shadowed sleep, stared up unseeingly. Deep indeed was her strange trance.

She had even forgotten that it was I to whom she spoke!

10

AN AMAZING and terrible story, was Stella's. In part, it was almost incredibile. Yet, much as I wished to doubt it, and much as I wished to discount the horror that it promised our fair earth, I knew that it must be true.

Prominent scientists have speculated often enough of the possibility of other worlds, other planes, side-by-side with our own. For there is nothing solid or impenetrable about the matter of our universe. The electron is thought to be only a vibration in the ether. And in all probability, there are vibrating fields of force, forming other electrons, other atoms, other suns and planets, existing beside our world, yet not making their existence known. Only a tiny band of the vibrations in the spectrum is visible to our eyes as light. If our eyes were tuned to other bands, above

the ultraviolet, or below the infrared, what new, strange worlds might burst upon our vision?

No, I could not doubt that part of Stella's story. My father had studied the evidence upon the existence of such worlds invisible to us, more deeply than any other man, had published his findings, with complete mathematical proof, in his startling work, *Interlocking Universes*. If those parallel worlds were to be discovered, he was the logical man to make the discovery. And I could not doubt that he had made it—for I had seen that world of dread nightmare, beyond the copper ring!

And I had seen, in that dark, alien world, the city of the creeping things of blackness. I could well believe the part of the story about those malignant entities stealing the bodies of men and animals. It offered the rational solution of all the facts I had observed, since the night of my coming to Hebron.

And it came to me suddenly that soon the monstrous beings would have the machine repaired; they could need no further aid from me. Then other hordes of the black shapes would come through, to seize our world, Stella had said, to enslave humanity, to aid them in making our world a planet of darkness like the grim sphere they left.

I must do something against them! Fight them—fight them with

light! Light was the one force that destroyed them; that had freed Stella from her bondage. But I must obtain better means of making light than a few matches. Lamps would do; a searchlight, perhaps.

And I was determined to take Stella to Hebron, if she were able to go. I must go there to find the supplies I needed, and yet I could not bear the thought of leaving her for the monstrosities to find when night fell again, to seize her fair body again for their foul ends.

I found that at my command she would move, stand, and walk, though slowly and stiffly, like a person walking in sleep. It was still early morning, and I thought there might be time for her to walk to Hebron, with me to support her steps, before the fall of darkness.

I investigated her possessions in the room, found clothing for her: woolen stockings, strong shoes, knickers, sweater, gloves, cap. Her efforts to dress herself were slow and clumsy, like those of a weary child, trying to pull off his clothing when half asleep, and I had to aid her.

She seemed not to be hungry. But when we stopped in the dining room, where the remainder of the food still lay on the table, I made her drink a tin of milk. She did it mechanically. As for myself, I ate heartily, despite, ill-omened recollections of how I had eaten at this

table on the eve of my first attempt to escape.

We set out across the snow, following along by the wire fence as I had done before, I could distinguish my old footprints and the mingled tracks of wolf, man, and horse, in the trail the pursuing pack had left. We followed that trail with greater ease now, for the soft snow had been packed by the running feet.

I walked with an arm about Stella's waist, sometimes half-carrying her, speaking to her encouragingly. She responded with slow, dull mechanical efforts. Her mind seemed far away; her blue eyes were misty with strange dreams.

AS THE HOURS of weary struggle went by, with her warm body against mine, it came to me that I loved her very much.

Once I stopped, and drew her unresisting body fiercely to me, and brought my mouth close to her pale lips, that were composed, and a little parted, and perfumed with sleep. Her blue eyes stared at me blankly, still clouded with sleep, devoid of feeling or understanding. I pushed her pliant body back, and led her on across the snow.

The sun reached the zenith, and began declining, slowly westward.

As evening wore on. Stella seemed to tire—or perhaps it was only that her trance-like state became

deeper. She responded more slowly to my urgings that we must hurry. When for a few moments, my encouraging voice was silent, she stood motionless, rigid, as if lost in strange vision.

I hurried her on desperately, commanding her steadily to keep up her efforts. My eyes were anxiously on the setting sun. I knew that we would have scant time to reach the village before the fall of night; haste was imperative.

At last, when the sun was still some distance above the white horizon, we came within sight of the town of Hebron. A cluster of dark specks, upon the limitless plain of glittering snow. Three miles away, they must have been.

Still the girl seemed to sink deeper into the strange sea of sleep from which only hypnotic influence had lifted her. By the time we had covered another mile, she refused to respond to my words. She was breathing slowly, regularly; her body was limp, flaccid; her eyes had closed. I could do nothing to rouse her.

The sun had touched the snow, coloring the western world with pale rose and purple fires. Darkness was not far away.

Desperately, I took the limp, relaxed body of the girl upon my shoulders and staggered on beneath the burden. It was no more than two miles to Hebron; I had

hopes of getting there with her before dark.

But the snow was so deep as to make the effort of even unburdened walking exhausting. And my body was worn out, after the terrible experiences I had lately undergone. Before I had tottered on half a mile, I realized that my effort was hopeless.

Dusk had fallen. The moon had not yet risen, but the snow gleamed silvery under the ghostly twilight that still flooded the sky. My ears were straining fearfully for the voice of the dreadful pack, but a shroud of utter silence hung about me. I was still plodding wearily along, carrying Stella.

Abruptly I noticed that her body, against my hands, was becoming strangely cold. Anxiously, I laid her down upon the snow, to examine her—trembling with a premonition of the approaching horror.

Her body was icy cold. And it had again become ghastly, deathly white. White as when I had seen her running over the snow with the gaunt gray wolf!

But her limbs, strangely, did not stiffen; they were still pliant, relaxed. It was not the chill of death coming over her; it was the cold of that alien life, which the sunlight had driven from her, returning with the darkness!

I knew that she would soon be a human girl no longer, but a weird

wolf-woman. For a few moments I crouched beside her inert body, pleading wildly with her to come back to me, crying out to her almost insanely.

THEN I SAW the hopelessness of it, and the danger. The monstrous life would flow into her again. And she would carry me back to hateful captivity in the subterranean temple, to be a slave of the monsters—or perhaps a member of their malefic society.

I must escape! For her sake. For the world's. It would be better to abandon her now, and go on alone, than have her carry me back. Perhaps I would have another chance to save her.

And I must somehow render her helpless, so that she could not pursue me, when the dread life returned to her body.

I snatched off my coat, and then my shirt. In anxious haste, I tore the shirt into strips, which I twisted rapidly into cords. I drew her ankles together, passed the improvised bonds about them, knotted them tightly. I turned the frightfully pallid, corpse-cold girl upon her face, crossed the lax arms behind her back, and fastened her wrists together with another rope of twisted cloth. Then, by way of extra precaution, I slipped the belt from my trousers and buckled it firmly about her waist, over the crossed wrists, pinioning them.

Finally I spread on the snow the coat I had taken off, and laid her upon it, for I wanted her to be as comfortable as possible.

Then I started off toward Hebron, where a little cluster of white lights shone across the snow, through the gray, gathering dusk. I had gone but a few steps when something made me pause, look back, fearfully.

The inert, deathly pallid body of the girl still lay upon the coat. Beyond it, I glimpsed a strange and dreadful thing, moving swiftly through the ghostly, gray twilight.

Incredible and hideous was the thing I gazed upon. It was a mass of darkness, flowing over the snow. A creeping cloud of foul blackness, shapeless and many-tentacled. Its form changed continually as it moved. It had no limbs, no features — only the inky, snake-like, clinging extensions of its blackness, that it thrust out to move itself along. But deep within it were two bright green points — like eyes. Green baleful orbs, aflame with fiendish malevolence!

IT WAS ALIVE, this living darkness. It was unlike any higher form of life. But it has since come to me that it resembled the amoeba — a single-cell animal, a flowing mass of protoplasmic slime. Like the amoeba this darkness moved by extended narrow pseudopods from its mass. And the green eyes

of horror, in which its unearthly life appeared to be concentrated, perhaps correspond to the vacuoles or nuclei of the protozoan animals.

I realized, with a paralyzing sensation of horror unutterable, that it was one of the monsters from that world of black nightmare, beyond the copper ring. And that it was coming to claim again Stella's body, to which it was still connected by some bond.

Though it seemed only to creep or flow, it moved with a terrible swiftness — far faster, even, than the wolves.

In a moment after I saw it, it had reached Stella's body. It paused, hung over her, a thick, viscid, clinging cloud of blackness with those greenish, fearful eyes staring from its foul mass. For a moment it hid her body, with its creeping, sprawling, ink-black and shapeless masses, crawling over her like horrid tentacles.

Then it *flowed* into her body.

It seemed to stream through her nostrils, into her mouth. The black cloud hanging over her steadily diminished. The infernal green orbs remained above, in the writhing darkness, until the last. And then they seemed to sink into her eyes. Abruptly, her pallid body came to terrible life.

She writhed, straining at her bonds with preternatural strength, rolling from the coat into the snow, hideously convulsed. Her eyes were

open again—and they shone, not with their own life, but with the dreadful fire of the green, malevolent orbs that had sunk into them.

Her eyes were the eyes of the creeping blackness.

From her throat came the soul-numbing, wolfish baying, that I had already heard under such frightful circumstances. It was an animal cry, yet it had an uncanny human note that was calling to the pack!

That sound nerved my paralyzed limbs. For the few moments that it had taken the monstrous thing of blackness to flow into Stella's body, I had stood motionless, transfixed with the horror of it.

Now I turned and ran madly across the snow toward the dancing lights of Hebron. Behind me the werewolf still writhed in the snow, trying to break her bonds, howling weirdly—summoning the pack!

Those twinkling lights seemed to mock me. They looked very near across the ghostly, gleaming plain of snow. They seemed to dance away from me as I ran. They seemed to move like fireflies, pausing until I was almost upon them, then retreating, to scintillate far across the snow.

I forgot my weariness, forgot the dull, throbbing pain of the unhealed wound in my leg. I ran

desperately, as I had never run before.

Before I had covered half the distance, I heard behind me the voice of the pack. A weird, wailing, far-off cry which grew swiftly louder. The werewolf had called, and the pack was coming to free her.

ON I RAN. My steps seemed so pitifully slow. My feet sank deep into the snow which seemed to cling to them with maleficent demon-fingers. And the lights that seemed so near appeared to be dancing mockingly away before me.

Sweat poured from my body. My lungs throbbed with pain. My heart seemed to hammer against the base of my brain. My mind seemed drowning in a sea of pain. And on I ran.

The lights of Hebron became unreal ghost-fires, false will-o'-the wisps. They quivered before me in a blank world of gray darkness. And I labored on toward them, through a dull haze of agony. I saw nothing else. And nothing did I hear, but the moaning of the pack.

I was so weary that I could not think. But I suddenly became aware that the pack was very near. I think I turned my head and glanced back for a moment. Or it may be that I remember the pack only as I saw it in imagina-

tion. But I have a very vivid picture of gaunt gray wolves leaping and baying hideously, and pallid, green-eyed men running with them, howling with them.

Yet on I ran, fighting the black mists of exhaustion that closed about my brain. Heartbreaking inertia seemed to oppose every effort, as if I were swimming against a resisting tide. On and on I ran, with eyes for nothing, thought for nothing, except the lights of Hebron, that seemed very near, and always fled before me.

Then suddenly I was lying in the soft snow with my eyes closed. The yielding couch was very comfortable to my exhausted body. I lay there, relaxed. I did not even try to rise; my strength was utterly gone. Blackness came upon me—unconsciousness that even the howling of the pack could not keep away. The weird ululation seemed to grow fainter and I knew no more.

II

"PRETTY NEAR all in, ain't you, Mister?" a rough voice penetrated to my fatigue-drugged mind. Strong hands were helping me to my feet. I opened my eyes and stared confusedly about me. Two roughly clad men were supporting me. And another, whom I recognized as the station

agent, Connell, held a gasoline lantern.

Before me, almost at hand, were the lights of Hebron, which had seemed to dance away so mockingly. I saw that I had collapsed in the outskirts of the straggling village—so near the few street lights that the pack had been unable to approach me.

"That you, McLaurin?" Connell demanded in surprise, recognizing my face. "We figgered they got you and Judson."

"They did," I found voice to say. "But they carried me off alive. I got away."

I was too nearly dead with exhaustion to answer their questions. Only vaguely do I recall how they carried me into a house, and undressed me. I went to sleep while they were examining the wound on my leg, exclaiming with horror at the marks of teeth. After I was sleeping they dressed it again, and then put me to bed.

It was noon of the following day when I awoke. A nervous boy of perhaps ten years was sitting by the bed. His name, he said, was Marvin Potts, son of Joel Potts, owner of a general store in Hebron. His father had been one of the men who had found me when their attention was attracted by the howling of the pack. I had been carried into the Potts home.

The boy called his mother. She, finding that I was hungry, soon

brought me coffee, biscuits, bacon, and fried potatoes. I ate with good appetite, though I was far from recovered from my desperate run to escape the pack. While I was eating, still lying in bed, raised on an elbow, my host came in. Connell, the station agent, and two other men were with him.

All were anxious to hear my story. I told it to them briefly, or as much of it as I thought they would believe.

From them I learned that the pack had found several more human victims. A lone ranch house had been raided on the night before and three men carried from it. They told me, too, that Mrs. Judson, frantic with grief over the loss of her husband, had gone out across the snow to seek him and had not come back. How well I recalled now that she had found him! Bitterly I reproached myself for having urged the man to risk the night trip with me.

I inquired if any steps had been made to hunt the wolves.

The sheriff, I learned, had organized a posse, which had ventured out from Hebron several times. Abundant tracks of men and wolves, running side by side, had been found. There had been no difficulty in following the trail. But, I gathered, the hunters had not been very eager for success. The snow was deep; they could not travel rapidly, and they had

owned no intention of meeting the pack by night. The trails had never been followed more than six or seven miles from Hebron. The sheriff had returned to the county seat, twelve miles down the railroad, promising to return when the snow had melted enough to make traveling easier. And the few score inhabitants of Hebron, though deeply disturbed by the fate of their neighbors who had been taken by the pack, had been too much terrorized to undertake any determined expedition on their own account.

When I spoke of getting someone to return with me to the ranch, quick evasions met me. The example of Judson's fate was very strongly in the minds of all present. None cared to risk being caught away from the town by night. I realized that I must act alone, unaided.

MOST OF THAT day I remained in bed, recuperating. I knew that I would need my full strength for the trial that lay before me. I investigated the available resources, however, and made plans for my mad attempt to strike at the menace that overhung humanity.

With the boy, Marvin, acting as my agent, I purchased an ancient buggy, with a brown nag and harness, to carry me back to the ranch house; my efforts to rent

a vehicle, or to hire someone to take me back, had proved signal failures. I had him also to arrange to procure for me other equipment.

I had him buy a dozen gasoline lanterns, with an abundant supply of mantles, and two five-gallon tins, full of gasoline. Finding that the Hebron High School boasted a meager supply of laboratory equipment, I sent the boy in search of magnesium ribbon, and sulphur. He returned with a good bundle of the thin, metallic strips, cut in various lengths. I dipped the ends of each strip in molten sulphur, to facilitate lighting.

He bought me two powerful electric flashlights, with a supply of spare bulbs and batteries, extra ammunition for my automatic, and two dozen sticks of dynamite, with caps and fuses.

Next morning I woke early, feeling much recovered. The shallow, gnawed wound in my leg was fast healing, and had ceased to pain me greatly. As I sat down to a simple breakfast with the Potts family, I assured them confidently that, on this day, I was going to return to the den of the pack, from which I had escaped, and put an end to it.

Before we had finished eating, I heard the hail of the man from whom the buggy had been bought, driving up to deliver it and collect the ample price that Marvin Potts had agreed that I would pay.

The boy went out with me. We took the vehicle, and together made the rounds of Hebron's few stores, collecting the articles he had bought for me on the day before—the lanterns, the supply of gasoline, the electric searchlights, and the dynamite.

IT WAS STILL early morning when I left the boy at the end of the street, rewarding him with a bill, and drove alone through the snow, back toward the lonely ranch house where I had experienced such horrors.

The day, though bright, was cold. The snow had never begun to thaw; it was still as thick as ever. My brown nag plodded along slowly, his feet and the buggy's tires crunching through the crusted snow.

As Hebron vanished behind me, and I was surrounded only by the vast, glittering sea of unbroken snow, fear and dread came upon me—a violent longing to hurry to some crowded haunt of men. My imagination pictured the terrors of the night, when the pack would run again upon the snow.

How easy would it be to return, take the train for New York, and forget the terrors of this place! No, I knew that I could never forget. I could never forget the threat of that dread, night-black world beyond the copper ring, the fact that its spawn planned to seize our

world and make it a sphere of rotting gloom like their own.

And Stella! Never could I forget her. I knew now that I loved her, that I must save her or perish with her.

I urged the pony on, across the lonely and illimitable desert of sunlit snow.

It was somewhat past noon when I reached the ranch house, but I still had a safe margin of daylight. Immediately I set about my preparations.

There was much to do: unpacking the boxes piled on the buggy; filling the dozen gasoline lanterns, pumping them up with air, burning their mantles, and seeing that they operated satisfactorily; attaching caps and fuses to the sticks of dynamite, testing my powerful flashlights; loading the little automatic and filling the extra clips; stowing conveniently in my pockets an abundance of matches, ammunition, extra batteries for the electric torches, the strips of magnesium ribbon.

The sun was still high when the preparations were completed. I took time then to put the pony in the stable behind the old house. I locked the door, and barricaded the building, so that, if any dread change converted the animal into a green-eyed monster, it would find itself imprisoned.

Then I went through the old house, carrying a lighted lantern.

It was silent, deserted. All the monsters were evidently below. The door of the cellar was closed, all crevices chinked against light.

I lit my dozen powerful lanterns and arranged them in a circle about it.

Then I threw back the door.

A weird and fearful howl came from the dark passage below it! I heard the rush of feet, as the howling thing retreated down the tunnel. From below came angry growls, shrill feral whines.

A physical wave of nauseating horror broke chillingly over me, at the thought of invading that red-lit temple-burrow, where I had endured such horror. I shrank back, trembling. But at the thought of my own father and lovely, blue-eyed Stella, down in that temple of terror, possessed by foul monsters, I recovered my courage.

I stepped back toward the yawning black mouth of the den that these monsters had built.

The lanterns I had first intended to leave in a ring about the mouth of the burrow, except one to carry with me. Now it occurred to me that they would prevent the escape of the monsters more effectively if scattered along the passage. I gathered up six of them, three in each hand, and started down the steps.

Their powerful white rays illuminated the old cellar with welcome brilliance. I left one of them there, in the center of the cellar's

floor. And three more of them I set along the slanting passage that led down into the deeper excavation.

I intended to set the two that remained on the floor of the temple, and perhaps return to the surface for others. I hoped that the light would drive the alien life from all of the pack, as it had from Stella. When they were unconscious, I could carry out Stella and my father, and any of the others that seemed whole enough for normal life. The great machine, and the temple itself, I intended to destroy with the dynamite.

I STEPPED FROM the end of the passage, into the vast, black, many-pillared hall. The intense white radiance of the faintly humming lanterns dispelled the terrible, blood-red gloom. I heard an appalling chorus of agonized animal cries; weird, feral whines and howls of pain. In the farther end of the long hall, beyond the massive ebon pillars, I saw slinking, green-orbed forms, crowding into the shadows.

I set the two lanterns down on the black floor and drew one of the powerful flashlights from my pocket. Its intense, penetrating beam probed the shadows beyond the huge columns of jet. The cowering, howling shapes of men and wolves shrieked when it touched them, and fell to the black floor.

Confidently I stepped forward, to search out new corners with the brilliant finger of light.

Fatal confidence! I had underestimated the cunning and the science of my enemies. When I first saw the black globe, my foot was already poised above it. A perfect sphere of utter blackness, a foot-thick globe that looked as if it had been turned from midnight crystal.

I could not avoid touching it. And it seemed to explode at my touch. There was a dull, ominous *plop*, and billowing darkness rushed from it. A black gas swirled up about me and shrouded me in smothering gloom.

Wildly I turned, dashed back toward the passage that led up to open air and daylight. I was utterly blinded. The blazing lanterns were completely invisible. I heard one of them dashed over by my blundering feet.

Then I stumbled against the cold temple wall. In feverish haste I felt along it. In either direction, as far as I could reach, the wall was smooth. Where was the passage? A dozen feet I blundered along, feeling the wall. No, the passage must be in the other direction.

I turned. The triumphant, unearthly baying of the pack reached my ears; the padding of feet down the length of the temple. I rushed along the wall, stumbled and fell over a hot lantern.

And they were upon me . . .

THE STRANGE, sourceless, bloodhued radiance of the temple was about me once more. The thick, black pillars thrust up beside me, to support the ebon roof. I was bound, helpless, to one of those cold, massive columns, as I had once been before, with the same bloody rope.

Before me was the strange mechanism that opened the way to that other plane—the Black Dimension—by changing the vibration frequencies of the matter of one world, to those of the other, interlocking universe. The red light gleamed like blood on the copper ring, and the huge mirror behind it. I saw with relief that the electron tubes were dead, the gasoline engine silent, the blackness gone from the ring.

And before the ring had been erected a fearful altar, upon which reposed the torn, mangled, and bleeding bodies of men and women, of gaunt gray wolves, and little coyotes, and other animals. The pack had found good hunting, on the two nights that I had been gone!

The corpse-white, green-orbed, monstrous things, the frightfully changed bodies of Stella and my father and the others, were about me.

"Your coming back is good," the whining, feral tones of the thing

in my father's body rang dreadfully in my ears. "The manufacturer of electricity will not run. You return to make it turn again. The way must be opened again, for new life to come to these that wait." He pointed a deathly white arm to the pile of writhing bodies on the black floor.

"Then the new life to you also we will bring. Too many times you run away. You become one with us. And we seek a man who will act as we say. But first must the way be opened again."

"From our world will the life come. To take the bodies of men as machines. To make gas of darkness like that you found within this hall, to hide all the light of your world, and make it fit for us."

My mind reeled with horror at thought of the inconceivable, unthinkable menace risen like a dread specter to face humanity. At the thought that soon I, too, would be a mere machine. My body, cold and white as a corpse, doing unnamable deeds at the command of the thing of darkness whose green eyes would blaze in my sockets!

"Quickly tell the method to turn the maker of electricity," came the maleficent snarl, menacing, gloating, "or we gnaw the flesh from your bones, and seek another who will do our will!"

I AGREED TO attempt to start the little gasoline engine, hoping for some opportunity to turn the tables again. I was certain that I could do nothing so long as I was bound to the pillar. And the threat to find another normal man to take my place as teacher of these monsters from that alien world brought realization that I must strike soon.

Presently they were convinced that they required more than verbal aid in starting the little motor. One of the mechanics unbound me, and led me over to the machine, keeping a painful grip upon my arm with ice-cold fingers.

Unobtrusively, I dropped a hand to feel my pockets. They were empty!

"Make not light!" my father snarled warningly, having seen the movement.

They had awakened to the necessity of searching my person. Glancing about the red-lit temple, I saw the articles they had taken from me, in a little pile against the base of a huge black pillar. The automatic, spare clips of ammunition, flashlights, batteries, boxes of matches, strips of magnesium ribbon. The two gasoline lanterns that I had brought into the great hall were there too, having evidently been extinguished by the black gas which had blinded me.

Two gray wolves stood alertly beside the articles, which must have been taken from me before I recovered consciousness after the onrush of the pack. Their strange green eyes stared at me balefully, through the crimson gloom.

After fussing with the engine for a few moments, while my father kept his cold, cruelly firm grip upon my shoulder, and scores of hideous green orbs in the bodies of wolves and men watched my every move, I discovered that it had stopped for lack of fuel. They had let it run on after I wrecked the machine, until the gasoline was exhausted.

I explained to my father that it would not run without more gasoline.

"Make it turn to cause electricity," he said, repeating his menacing, wolfish snarl, "or we gnaw the flesh from your bones, and find another man."

AT FIRST I insisted that I could not get gasoline without visiting some inhabited place. Under the threat of torture however—when they dragged me back toward the bloody rope—I confessed that the fuel in the gasoline lanterns might be used.

They were suspicious. They searched me again, to be certain that I had upon my person no means of making a light. And the lanterns were examined very care-

fully for any means of lighting without matches.

Finally they brought me the lanterns. With my father grasping my arm, I poured the gasoline from them into the engine's fuel tank. Under any circumstances it would have been difficult to avoid spilling the liquid. I took pains to spill as much as seemed possible without rousing suspicion—contriving to pour a little pool of it under the exhaust, where a spark might ignite the fumes.

Then they made me start the engine. Coils hummed once more; the electron tubes lit. Blackness seemed to pour from the strange central tube, to be reflected into the great copper ring by the wide, polished mirror.

Again, I looked through the vast ring into the Black Dimension!

Before me lay a sky of gloom, of darkness unutterable and unbroken, stagnant, lurid waters, dimly aglow with the luminosity of foul decay; worn black hills, covered with obscene, writhing, reptilian vegetation that glowed vaguely and lividly green. And on one of those hills was the city.

A sprawled smear of red evil, it was, a splash of crimson darkness, of red corruption. It spread over the hill like a many-tentacled monster of dark red mist. Ugly masses rose from it, wart-like knobs and projections—ghastly

travesties of minarets and towers.

It was motionless. And within its reeking, fetid scarlet darkness, lurked things of creeping gloom—nameless hordes of things like that unthinkable monstrosity that I had seen flow into Stella's body. Green-eyed, living horrors of flowing blackness.

The monsters about me howled through the ring, into that black world—calling!

And soon, through the copper ring, came flowing a river of shapeless, inconceivable horror! Formless monsters of an alien universe. Foul beings of the darkness.—spawn of the Black Dimension!

Fearful green eyes were swimming in clotted, creeping masses of evil darkness. They swarmed over the pile of dead things on the floor. And the dead rose to forbidden, nameless life!

Mutilated corpses, and the torn bodies of wolves sprang up, whining, snarling. And the eyes of each were the malevolent, glaring green eyes of the things that had flowed into them.

I was still beside the rhythmically throbbing little engine. As I shrank back in numbed horror from the fearful spectacle of the dead rising to unhallowed life, my eyes fell despairingly upon the little pool of gasoline I had spilled upon the black floor. It was not yet ignited.

I had some fleeting idea of trying to saturate my hand with gasoline and hold it in front of the exhaust, to make of it a living torch. But it was too late for that, and the ruthless, ice-cold fingers still clutched my arm painfully.

Then my father whined wolfishly.

A creepy, formless, obscene mass of blackness, with twin green orbs in it, glowing with mad, alien fires, left the river of them that poured through the ring and crept across to me.

"Now you become one like us!" came the whining voice.

The thing was coming to flow into my body, to make me its slave, its machine!

I screamed, struggled in the cruel hands that held me. In an insanity of terror, I cursed and pleaded — promised to give the monsters the world. And the creeping blackness came on. I collapsed, drenched with icy sweat, quivering, nauseated with horror.

THEN, AS I had prayed it would do, the little engine coughed. A stream of pale red sparks shot from the exhaust. There was a sudden, dull explosive sound of igniting vapor. A yellow flash lit the black-pillared temple.

A flickering column of blue and yellow flame rose from the pool of gasoline beside the engine.

The things of blackness were

consumed by the light — they vanished!

The temple became a bedlam of shrill, agonized howls, of confused, rushing, panic-stricken bodies. The fierce grasp upon my arm was relaxed. My father fell upon the floor, writhing across the room toward the shelter of a black pillar, hiding his green eyes with an arm flung across them.

I saw that the gray wolves had deserted their post beside the articles of mine they had been guarding, at the foot of the massive black column. I left the flickering pillar of fire and dashed across to them.

In a moment my shaking hands had clutched upon one of the powerful electric flashlights. In desperate haste I found the switch and flicked it on. With the intense, dazzling beam, I swept the vast columned hall. The hellish chorus of animal cries of pain rose to a higher pitch. I saw gray wolves and ghastly white men cowering in the shadows of the massive pillars.

I snatched up the other searchlight and turned it on. Then, hastily gathering up pistol, ammunition, matches, and strips of magnesium ribbon, I retreated to a position beside the flaring gasoline.

This time I moved very cautiously, flashing the light before me to avoid stumbling into another bomb of darkness, like that which

had been my undoing before. But I think my precaution was useless; I am sure, from what I afterward saw, that only one had been prepared.

AS I GOT back to the engine, I noticed that it was still running, that the way to the Black Dimension, through the copper ring, was still open. I cut off the fuel at the carburetor. The little engine coughed, panted, slowed down. The wall of darkness faded from the copper ring, breaking our connection with that hideous world of another interpenetrating universe.

Then I hastily laid the flashlights on the floor, laying them so they cast their broad, bright beams in opposite directions. I fumbled for matches, struck one to the end of a strip of magnesium ribbon, to which I had applied sulphur to make it easier to light.

It burst into sudden blinding, dazzling, white radiance, bright as a miniature sun. I flung it across the great black hall. It outlined a white parabola. Its intense light cut the shadows from behind the ebon pillars.

The cowering, hiding things howled in new agony. They lay on the black floor, trembling, writhing, fearfully contorted. Low, agonized whinings came from them.

Again and again I ignited the thin ribbons of metal and flung

them flaming toward the corners of the room, to banish all shadow with their brilliant white fire.

The howling grew weaker, the whines died away. The wolves and the corpse-white men moved no more. Their fierce, twisting struggles of agony were stilled.

When the last strip of magnesium was gone, I drew the automatic, put a bullet through the little engine's gasoline tank, and lit a match to the thin stream of clear liquid that trickled out. As a new flaring pillar of light rushed upward, I hurried toward the passage that led to the surface, watching for another of those black spheres that erupted darkness.

I found the gasoline lanterns I had left in the tunnel still burning; the monsters had evidently found no way of putting them out.

On the surface I ran. I gathered up the six lanterns I had left there—still burning brilliantly in the gathering dusk—and plunged with them back down the passage, into the huge, pillared temple.

The monsters were still inert, unconscious.

I arranged the powerfull lanterns about the floor, so placed that every part of the strange temple was brilliantly illuminated. In the penetrating radiance, the monsters lay motionless.

Returning to the surface, I brought one of my full cans of gasoline, and two more of the light-

ed lanterns. I filled, pumped up, and lit the two lanterns from which I had drawn the gasoline.

Then I went about the black-walled temple, always keeping two lanterns close beside me, and dragged the lax, ice-cold bodies from their crouching postures, turning them so the faces would be toward the light. I found Stella, her lovely body still unharmed, except for its deathly pallor and its strange cold. And then I came upon my father. There was also the mangled thing that had been Judson, and the headless body that had been Blake Jetton, Stella's father. I gazed at many more lacerated human bodies and at the chill carcasses of wolves, of coyotes, of the gray horse, of a few other animals.

In half an hour, perhaps, the change was complete.

The unearthly chill of that alien life was gone from the bodies. Most of them quickly stiffened — with belated *rigor mortis*. Even my father was quite evidently dead. His body remained still and cold — though the strange chill had departed.

But Stella's exquisite form grew warm again; the soft flush of life came to it. She breathed and her heart beat slowly.

I carried her up to the old cellar, and laid her on its floor, with two lanterns blazing near her, to prevent any return of that forbidden life, while I finished the ghastly work left for me below.

I NEED NOT go into details . . .

But when I had used half my supply of dynamite, no recognizable fragments were left, either of the accursed machine, or of the bodies that had been animated with such monstrous life. I planted the other dozen sticks of dynamite beside the great black pillars, and in the walls of the tunnel . . .

The subterranean hall that I have called a temple will never be entered again.

When that work was done, I carried Stella up to her room, and put her very gently to bed. Through the night I watched her anxiously, keeping a bright light in the room. But there was no sign of what I feared. She slept deeply, but normally, apparently free from any taint of the monstrous life that had possessed her.

Dawn came after a weary night, and there was a rosy gleam upon the snow.

The sleeping girl stirred. Fathomless blue eyes opened, stared into mine. Startled eyes, eager, questioning. Not clouded with dream as when she had awakened before.

"Clovís!" Stella cried, in her natural, softly golden voice. "Clovís, what are you doing here? Where's Father? Dr. McLaurin?"

"You are all right?" I demanded eagerly. "You are well?"

"Well?" she said, raising her

exquisite head in surprise. "Of course I'm well. What could be the matter with me? Dr. McLaurin is going to try his great experiment today. Did you come to help?"

Then I knew—and a great gladness came with the knowledge—that all memory of the horror had been swept from her mind. She recalled nothing that had happened since the eve of the experiment that had brought such a train of terrors.

She looked suddenly past me—at the picture of myself upon the wall. There was a curious expression on her face; she flushed a little, looking very beautiful with heightened color.

"I didn't give you that picture," I accused her. I wished to avoid answering any questions, for the time being about her father or mine, or any experiments.

"I got it from your father," she confessed.

I have written this narrative in the home of Dr. Friedrichs, the noted New York psychiatrist, who is a close friend of mine. I came to him as soon as Stella and I reached New York, and he has since had me stay at his home, under his constant observation.

He assures me that, within a few weeks, I shall be completely recovered. But sometimes I doubt that I will ever be entirely sane. The horrors of that invasion from

another universe are graven too deeply upon my mind. I cannot bear to be alone in darkness, or even in moonlight. And I tremble when I hear the howling of a dog, and hastily seek bright lights and the company of human beings.

I have told Dr. Friedrichs my story, and he believes. It is because of his urging that I have written it down. It is an historical truism, my friend says, that all legend, myth, and folklore has a basis in fact. And no legends are wider spread than those of lycanthropy. It is remarkable that not only wolves are subjects of these legends, but the most ferocious wild animals of each country. In Scandinavia, for instance, the legends concern bears; on the continent of Europe, wolves; in South America, jaguars; in Asia and Africa, leopards and tigers. It is also remarkable that belief in possession by evil spirits, and belief in vampires, is associated with the widespread belief in werewolves.

Dr. Friedrichs thinks that through some cosmic accident, these monsters of the Black Dimension have been let into our world before; and that those curiously widespread legends and beliefs are folk-memories of horrors visited upon earth when those unthinkable monstrosities stole the bodies of men and of savage beasts, and hunted through the darkness.

Much might be said in support

of the theory, but I shall let my experience speak for itself.

Stella comes often to see me, and she is more exquisitely lovely than I had ever realized. My friend assures me that her mind is quite normal. Her lapse of memory is quite natural, he says, since her

mind was sleeping while the alien entity ruled her body. And he says there is no possibility that she will be possessed again.

We are planning to be married within a few weeks, as soon as Dr. Friedrichs says that I am sufficiently healed.

Coming Next Issue

That night things did happen! Rhoda told me later what her experience was that night. Unpleasant, very, but fortunately brief; and in a way it was merely the preliminary to what I went through immediately afterward.

She had no sooner retired than the Thing appeared, seemingly more tangible than ever before. It made no attempt to molest her, but it was obviously in a towering rage. It did everything but rave aloud. It stamped about the room, gnashing its teeth in a perfect frenzy; frowning and grimacing intimidatingly; shaking a huge fist in her face, pantomiming strangling her with its enormous hands; and plainly conveying through sheer force of wrath that she'd gone to the ultimate of its patience. Above all, it made her understand that it was jealous! Which gave her the cue. It speaks well for her spirit that she faced the ugly apparition with a smile of contempt, jeered at it, and demanded in a whisper:

"If you're jealous of Randall Crone, why don't you go and try to bully him, instead of acting like a coward by tormenting me all the time?" . . .

And it came!

The same huge warrior that Rhoda had so graphically described. And the instant it assumed visibility, I knew that I was in for a most unpleasant time . . .

The Red Witch
by Nictzin Dyalhis

It Is Written...

While not very many have commented upon the artwork that we have been running from time to time in these pages (as well as in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES* and *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*) those of you who did take notice have been most enthusiastic in your approval. And some of you have urged us to use the picture whenever we run an old story that had an illustration with it.

Sometimes it isn't possible, for technical reasons. The process we are using tends to make a picture somewhat darker than it was in the original; and while, in many instances, this does no harm at all—and even effects an improvement in some instances—there are times when the effect of the picture is spoiled. Particularly is this true of delicate, hazy, grayish-toned pictures wherein the effect was not due to a deficiency of the original engraving and printing process, but was, on the other hand, a triumphant presentation of just what the artist was trying to do. Some of the finest work of Hugh Rankin, for example, may be ruled out for this reason.

More often, it just isn't a good idea to re-run the original artwork because (a) it was not well done, or (b) it was not in any sense weird or fantastic—remove the caption for the story and present it as it is, and it is entirely mundane, or (c) it gives the story away. This happened more often than either artists or editors might have been aware of at the time; and one of the reasons for it was that sometimes this was the only possible scene that had anything weird or biz-

arre about it at all.

In looking through the old magazine, one finds an occasional illustration that is both weird and well done—but the majority are not unusual at all, and it wouldn't have made much difference even had they been drawn better than they were.

Patrick Madden writes from Lexington, Kentucky: "You can imagine my delight at discovering MOH a few weeks ago when I bought issue #16. I was a *WEIRD TALES* subscriber from approximately 1945 to 1950, and during those years I ordered almost the entire output of Arkham House. A few years ago I contacted several book-finders in the New York area and requested back issues of WT. Yes, there was one who could supply them, and I bought a few issues. But I soon became depressed by the exorbitant prices and the deplorable condition of the magazines.

"I gather that your formula is to use about 30% new stories, 40% reprints from WT and kindred magazines of the 30s and 40s, and 30% reprints from unlikely sources (such as the stories by Andreyeff and S Baring-Gould in #16). It's an excellent formula and I hope you don't vary it in the future . . .

"Not the least pleasing aspect of MOH is its editorial tone. Obviously the magazine is a labor of love with you. Of course all magazines say they 'want to hear from' their readers, and most have a staff assigned to readers' letters, but with MOH the request seems to be sincere, and it seems also that the reader gets a

thoughtful, personal response to his comments—much like two friends discussing a mutual interest. This is doubly welcome in your case, for as you know *aficionados* of fantasy and the supernatural are considerably rarer than golfers or *PLAYBOY* readers. Of course my friends humor me when I want to tell them about a story I just read, but—need I say more? . . .

"I was touched by the blend of modesty and writer's pride with which you spoke of entering your own stories in the 'competition' of any given issue. I haven't read anything of yours yet, but am looking forward to it greatly as soon as I receive the back issues. Also I was amused by your introduction to C. A. Smith's story (*The Monster of the Prophecy*) where you told of first discovering *WEIRD TALES*. With myself it was the other way around. I was hooked on *WEIRD TALES* first, and wondered was it ethical and proper for a straight supernatural fan to enjoy outer-space stories. To quote Mrs. Prilucik: Ah, sweet youth!

"This leads to reader Gene D'Orsogna's comment that at age seventeen he finds Howard's stories boring. In my opinion, nothing could be more natural. Howard's stories are close to the fairy tales that entertained us all from, say, ages five to ten. I defy you to find any young person from age ten to thirteen who doesn't love the supernatural, though naturally some become more 'hooked' than others. But tastes begin to change after, say, fifteen. You begin to become interested in Hemingway, *Studs Lonigan*, the current best-sellers—i.e., books that can tell you something about what 'real life' is going to be like. This new interest will bump against the old enthusiasm for fantasy, and writers such as Howard and Burroughs will be the first to be abandoned—though anyone ever

once interested in fantasy will always retain a loyalty to Poe and Lovecraft, I'll venture."

"Then later, if one is an avid reader, he will discover by, say, age 25, that books can tell you only so much about 'real life'. Then the first interest in fantasy will begin to revive—not to the extent that it will crowd out a love of good healthy realistic fiction, but to where the two co-exist with a healthy balance. I'll bet that at age 30, reader D'Orsogna is again a Howard fan, not because he finds anything 'camp' or 'pop-art' about Howard's work (our 'pop-culture' is undoubtedly giving Howard a big boost nowadays) but simply because he loves a good tale.

"(I'm not trying to speak *ex-cathedra* here, just, that's how it was with me. I speak from the lofty vantage-point of age 34.) . . .

"As for Lovecraft, I had the pleasure last year of examining a copy of *The Outsider and Others*. It was at the book auction at Swann Galleries, NYC, and as I remember it brought over \$200. But I was astonished at the number of stories therein which I had never seen anywhere else. Formerly I had thought that everything in *The Outsider* had been reprinted elsewhere, and that I had read them all! And *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* remains a mystery to me—I have never seen a copy. Any of the not-readily-available stories from either would be greatly appreciated."

My impression is that all the fiction that is really good (and some perhaps that isn't) in the first two collections of material by and about H. P. Lovecraft is available in three volumes still in print from Arkham House: *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (\$5), *At the Mountain of Madness and Other Novels* (\$6.50), and *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (\$6.50), and, for those who enjoy

**Did You Miss These
Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?**

#1, August 1963: *The Man With a Thousand Legs*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Thing of Beauty*, Wallace West; *The Yellow Sign*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Maze and the Monster*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Death of Halpin Frayser*, Ambrose Bierce; *Pabylon: 70 M.*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Inexperienced Ghost*, H. G. Wells; *The Unbeliever*, Robert Silverberg; *Fidel Bassin*, W. J. Stamper; *The Last Dawn*, Frank Lillie Pollock, *The Undying Head* Mark Twain.

#2, November 1963: *The Space-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *The Faceless Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Red Room*, H. G. Wells; *Hungary's Female Vampire*, Dean Lipton; *A Tough Tussle*, Ambrose Bierce; *Doorslammer*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Electric Chair*, George Waight; *The Other One*, Jerry L. Keane; *The Charmer*, Archie Binns; *Clarissa*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, Rudyard Kipling

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Don't Miss

**MY LADY OF
THE TUNNEL**
 by Arthur J. Burks

in the Fall issue of
STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

HPL's verse, *Collected Poems* (\$4). A great deal of the material in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* is marginal — collaborations, appreciations, essays, and verse. However, I could be mistaken about something good from the two original volumes not being presently available, so will look in to this as soon as I can.

Our "formula" isn't quite as tight as all that, although I think it would work out pretty close to the way you present it in the over-all sense. But I'd really go out of my ever lovin' blue-eyed mind trying to maintain that proportion for each and every issue of MOH! And we've used hardly anything from the 40s; not that I'm against this material but that I can't seem to make more than a dent in the mass of requests for material from the 30s and earlier!

Actually, I first heard of *WEIRD TALES* in 1926. I'd seen copies of *GHOST STORIES* on the newsstands, and looked through them, shuddering (the trick photography they used seemed very real to a ten-year-old), and remember being bowled over by the giant fly on the cover of the July 1926 *AMAZING STORIES*. Talking to some friends, and mentioning GS, brought the response from one of them, "You should read *WEIRD TALES*. They cut out your heart with a glass knife."

So I looked for *WEIRD TALES*. Well, I wasn't impressed. First of all, it was a pulp-sized magazine and I'd been impressed that these things were instruments of The Devil to rot the minds and corrupt the morals of unsuspecting youths and illiterate elders; but more important of all, the cover illustrations and artwork in those days was not only crude (that wouldn't have bothered me) but remarkably unexciting. There was simply no comparison with the real spooks you could see photographed in *GHOST STORIES* — wow! (Also

**Did You Miss These
Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?**

#3. Feb. 1964: Out of print.

#4 Sept. 1964: Out of print.

#5, September 1964: Cassius, Henry S. Whitehead; Love at First Sight, J. L. Miller; Five-Year Contract, J. Vernon Shea; The House of the Worm, Merle Prout, The Beautiful Suit, H. G. Wells; A Stranger Came to Reap, Stephen Dentinger; The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing, Walt Liebscher; Bones, Donald A. Wollheim; The Ghostly Rental, Henry James.

#6, November 1964: Caverns of Horror, Laurence Manning; Prodigy, Walt Liebscher; The Mask, Robert W. Chambers; The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde, Robert Barbour Johnson; The Feminine Fraction, David Grinnell; Dr. Heidegger's Experiment, Nathaniel Hawthorne; The Pacer, August Derleth; The Moth, H. G. Wells; The Door to Saturn, Clark Ashton Smith.

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Don't Miss
Jules de Grandin
in
THE DRUID'S
SHADOW
by Seabury Quinn
in the Fall issue of
STARTLING MYSTERY
STORIES

GS, somewhat later, had educational, historical material such as *Did the Ghost of Bismarck Warn the Kaiser?* Wow again!)

I'd love to discuss your comments to Mr. D'Orsogna, but let's give him and some of the other readers a chance to get in on it first.

Roger Dard writes from Perth, Box S, 1387, G.P.O. Perth, Western Australia: "Many thanks for publishing the MAGAZINE OF HORROR. Without your dedication we would not have a true weird magazine on the market.

"In reprinting from the magazines you will, naturally, reprint mostly from the late great WEIRD TALES. However, do not neglect such lesser publications as STRANGE, UN-CANNY, etc. Even delve into HORROR STORIES and TERROR TALES. The standard of these last-named magazines was of a much lower literary level than WT, but an occasional good, and forgotten, story may be found within their covers."

You're right that there were a few very good weird tales in HORROR STORIES and TERROR TALES, some by authors who also appeared in WT, others by writers not known to WT readers. Unfortunately, I do not have access to old copies of these magazines, which are now extremely rare and which, I suspect, are collected these days by lovers of sadistic stories. Most of them were mysteries — who was the fiend behind the ghastly plot which involved the (slaveringly described) torture and mutilation of innumerable lovely naked girls? — rather than genuine weird tales; and the "supernatural" effects turned out to be fake. You can get stronger stuff on the book racks these days, now that the works of the Marquis de Sade (more details and no anglo-saxon words suppressed)

**Did You Miss These
Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?**

#7, January 1965: *The Thing From — Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Shadows on the Wall*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Phantom Farmhouse*, Seabury Quinn; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way With Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E. B. Marriott-Watson; *The Shuttered Room*, H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R. H. D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passeur*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jack*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

#9, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Stain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H. G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

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Coming Next Issue
**THE MAN FROM
CINCINNATI**
by Holloway Horn

are available in many editions. Of course, you also have to take endless repetitions of the Marquis' tedious philosophy (shocking for the first few minutes perhaps; then a bore) along with the action—hmm, perhaps those old *HORROR STORIES* and *TERROR TALES* exhibits were more entertaining after all.

Casey Law writes from McPherson, Kansas, about our Summer issue: "This was a very surprising issue all around, and *Lazarus* was the most surprising item of all. Its lack of action made it difficult to keep attention on it, and its endless repetition of the same theme became tedious. And this, of course, was the author's intention—all these factors add up to make a tale of such realism that I find it hard to think of it as fiction. One of the best stories I have ever read, and almost certainly the best ever published in MOH. (I was about to say I would like to see more of the same, but I seriously doubt if anything like this could be done more than once.)"

I doubt it, too, Friend Law—and I also doubt that it is worth doing more than once. But for what it is (historical inaccuracy and all—as one reader noticed, the Emperor Augustus was not alive at the time when the resurrection of Lazarus was supposed to take place) I have found it unforgettable since the first time I read it many years back.

Greg Bear writes from San Diego, Calif.: "As for Clark Ashton Smith, I have something which may interest you. While making a run through a small, used-book store in Monterey, California, I came upon a portfolio of Smith's stories entitled, *The Double Shadow and Other Fantasies*. The stories inside of the copies of the portfolio—there were two, one with an autograph—were edited and

proof-read by Smith (I assume, since the same pen did the editing that signed the name). The evidence is such that the portfolios are either the results of a vanity press endeavor, pre-publication releases, or just collections of previously published stories. Perhaps you would be able to tell me, being a collector. The stories are *The Voyage of King Euvoran*, *The Maze of the Enchanter*, *The Double Shadow*, *A Night in Malneant*, *The Devotee of Evil*, and *The Willow Landscape*. The owner of the store informed me that Smith used to come in and browse around, and once brought these portfolios in to sell..."

While I'm not a collector now, I was at one time, and remember this portfolio, which I purchased circa 1935 for 25c or thereabouts. The entire contents were later reprinted in magazines as follows: *The Double Shadow*, WEIRD TALES February 1939; *The Maze of the Enchanter*, WEIRD TALES, September 1947, title changed to *Quest of the Gazolba*, and story somewhat abridged; *A Night in Malneant*, WEIRD TALES, September 1939; *The Willow Landscape*, WEIRD TALES June July 1939; and *The Devotee of Evil*, STIRRING SCIENCE STORIES, February 1941, in the second half of the magazine, which was entitled STIRRING FANTASY STORIES.

The six stories were reprinted by Arkham House in their first four collections of Smith's stories: *The Double Shadow* and *A Night in Malneant* in *Out of Space and Time* (out of print); *The Maze of Maal Dweb* in *Lost Worlds* (out of print); *The Willow Landscape* in *Genius Loci*; and *The Voyage of King Euvoran* and *The Devotee of Evil* in *The Abominations of Yondo*.

I'd say you'd made quite a find; I haven't heard of that portfolio being

Did You Miss These Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#10, August 1965: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Mech-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was It a Dream?*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Hau Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley*, (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Deyil's Pool*, Greye la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But Not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Muncing, Exorcist*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M.*, John Steinbeck; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL*, Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Heredity*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

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Did You Miss These**Back Issues Of****MAGAZINE OF HORROR?**

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of Star-Spawn*, Derleth & Scherer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now the Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel DeFoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Marnurth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lillies*, Roert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyeff; *Mr. Octbur*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog That Laughed*, Charles Willard Diffin; *Ah, Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The Leaden Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Sense of Crawling*, Robert Edmund Alter; *The Laughing Duke*, Wallace West; *Dermot's Bane*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey; "Williamson", Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse of Amen-Ra*, Valerian Rousseau.

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so much as quoted for years.

Mike Ashley writes from Kent, England: "*The Leaden Ring* was very good indeed. I'm always amazed at how these Victorian authors got that real sense of horror. In fact, of all the horror stories I've read, very few have really caused me to shudder, and look twice at the shadows, and practically all of these were by Victorian authors. They really had the knack, and this one is no exception. I'd like to see some more lesser-known pieces by the nineteenth century crowd. In particular, Mary Wilkins-Freeman and M. R. James."

Perhaps it is the aura of conviction in the better work of the Victorians that projects the feeling. I suspect that it was partly due to the areas of communication that they repressed that they were able to express other areas with an intensity that makes much of contemporary fiction, with its utter lack of inhibition, relatively pallid by comparison.

Robert Steacy, who thought *Night and Silence* and *The Dog That Laughed* should share top honors in issue #16, writes: "There was a long drop from the two #1s to #3, but these two were well below several of your better stories — to name a few: *The Shuttered Room*, *The Abyss*, *Proof*, *Dark Hollow*, and *The Lair of the Star-Spawn*.

"I would like to see more by R.A.W. Lowndes. His stories are like pop-top beer — oldtime flavor and modern convenience.

"I thought the illustrations appropriate, especially after looking at those in some of my old *WEIRD TALES*, which were too overdone.

Gary Morris writes from Cincinnati, Ohio, to remind us of something we said to a reader in our third issue, February 1964: "On re-reading

some back issues of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, I came across the following letter from J. W. Daley . . .

"I know you are going to hear from the usual Lovecraft-Merritt-Kuttner group, and if you start using that stuff, you are going to meet the inevitable fate of other magazines which published the works of these stereotyped mimics . . . whatever you do, please! please! please!, no Merritt, no Lovecraft, no C. L. Moore, etc."

"This man obviously has no business reading MOH if he hates these authors so much. Stereotyped mimics? Catherine L. Moore pioneered in *WEIRD TALES* with such literate, original stories as *Shambleau*, *Scarlet Dream*, *Hellsgarde*—the list is endless. And when she cracked the science fiction market in 1934, her stories grew to an almost unparalleled brilliance. *Bright Illusion*, *Greater Than Gods*, *There Shall Be Darkness*, *Judgment Night*, *No Woman Born*—that list, too, is endless. Very few of these brilliant stories are in print today, and you are doing the readers a great dis-service by refusing to print any of them.

"I really don't have to mention HPL or Merritt, both of whom were brilliant men with excellent styles of writing. Although both are generally recognized for their greatness today, the short stories of A. Merritt, particularly *The Woman of the Wood*, have almost been forgotten in favor of his excellent fantasy novels.

"You replied to Daly's letter that you would heed his plea, certainly to the extent of not letting any single type of weird or horror story dominate the magazine, issue after issue.

"May I cite to you issues 1, 2, 3, 4, and various issues of MOH, all of which featured that inane little Frenchman, Jules de Graindin. Now there is a stereotyped mimic; Quinn's stories are definitely unoriginal, and

written with a false air of sophistication. Ugh!

"Why no Kuttner? After marrying Moore, his talents increased tremendously, and he excelled at the John Collier type of story under the guise of Lewis Padgett. Come on, RAWL, let's get with it!

"How much do you pay per word on acceptance of a story?"

No, you may not quote a pledge that I made in relation to one publication, *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, then cite my practices in relation to a different publication, *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, and charge me with delinquency. Jules de Graindin does not appear in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*; he appears in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, which has a different policy.

Mr. Daly has as much business reading MOH, and trying to persuade me not to publish authors he does not like, as you have reading SMS and trying to persuade me not to run an author whom you do not like. He also has just as much right to feel that continued publication of the authors he did not like lay behind the final disappearance of various magazines as you have to feel that I am doing a dis-service in not running stories by your favorites.

It so happens that I share your appreciation of the authors that Mr. Daly does not care for. Up to now, most have not been available to me, under conditions which I could meet; if the situation changes, I shall be very happy to run some of their material—it's first class to my taste, to yours, and, from what I have heard from other readers, to many others. Fine! You'll see them in our pages when it is possible for me to get them.

At the present time, we pay 1c a word on publication for new stories. RAWL

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#1, Winter 1966/67: The Girl in the Golden Atom, Ray Cummings; The City of Singing Flame, Clark Ashton Smith; Voice of Atlantis, Laurence Manning; The Plague, George H. Smith; The Question, J. Hunter Holly.

#2, Spring 1967: The Moon Menace, Edmond Hamilton; Dust, Wallace West; The White City, David H. Keller, M.D.; Rimghost, A. Bertram Chandler; Seeds From Space, Laurence Manning.

#3, Summer 1967: Beyond the Singing Flame, Clark Ashton Smith; Disowned, Victor Enders-Smith; A Single Rose, Jon DeCles; The Last American, J. A. Mitchell, The Man Who Awoke, Laurence Manning.



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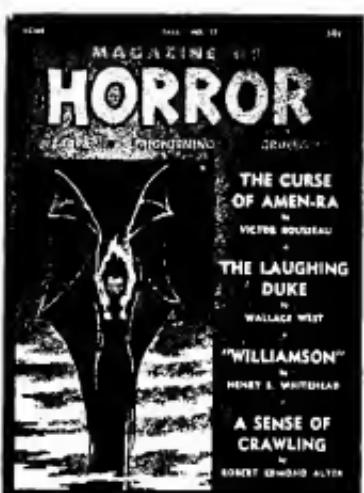
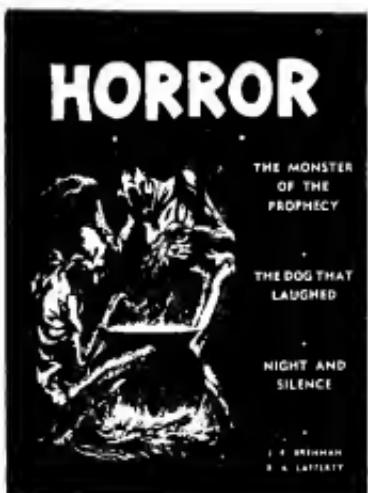
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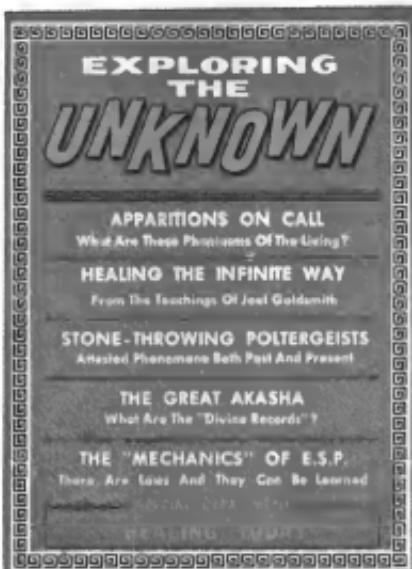
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